

LONDON THE READER

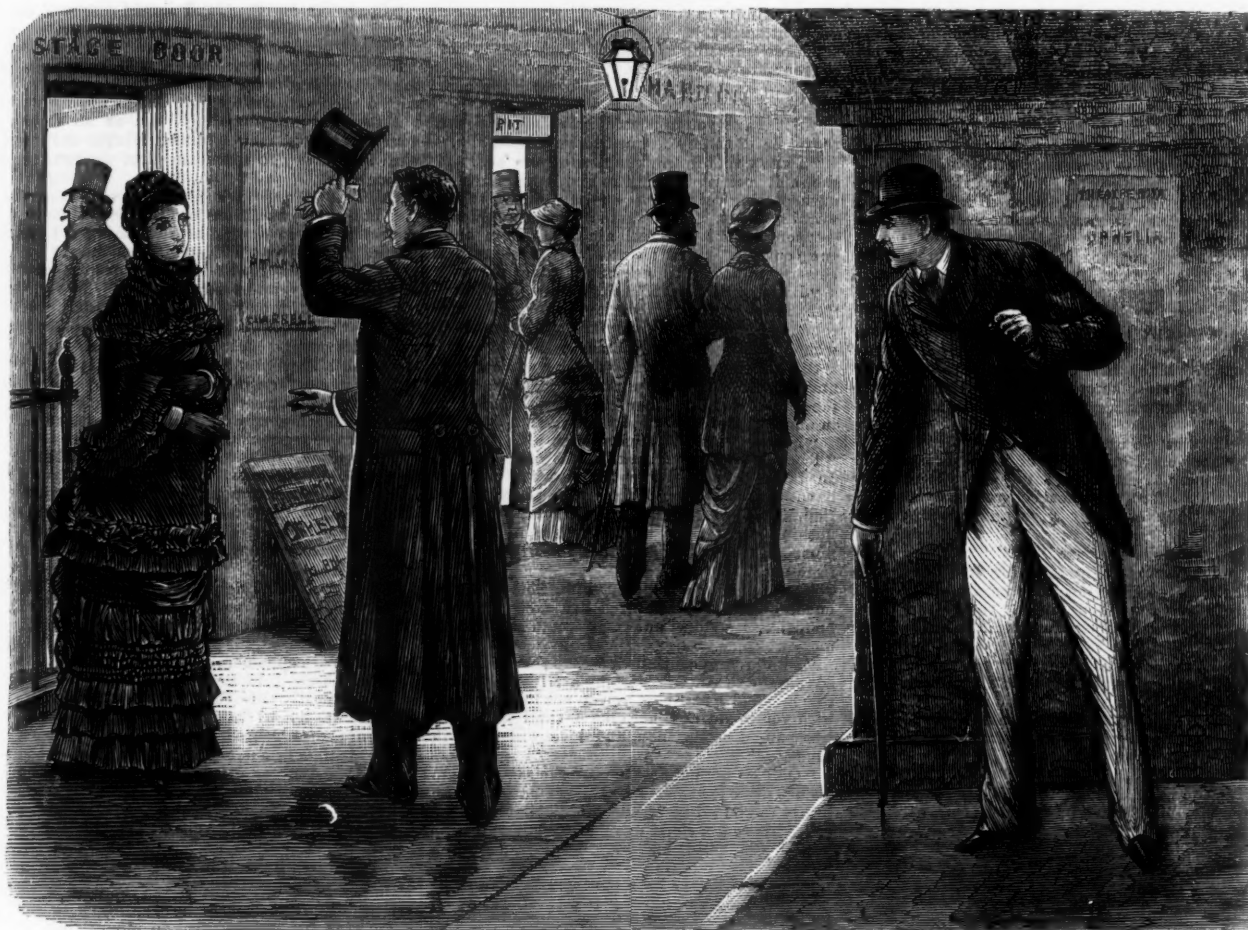
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE STAGE DOOR NOW OPENED AND HE HURRIEDLY DREW BACK.]

A LONG ESTRANGEMENT.

CHAPTER X.

AGAINST THE TIDE.

The flowerets strown
By churlish Time, in cheerlier mood
Now are withering,

WHEN Claude Daubeney had made his confession he turned and took both the hands of his sister, looking anxiously in her face, hoping to read a welcome answer there. But her eyes were downcast, and about the pretty mouth and brow there were indications of troubled thought.

"Why do you not say something, Phyllis?" he asked.

"What shall I say to you? I am not Minnie," she replied.

"That is mere evasion," he said. "You know whether the love I have for her is to bring me joy or sorrow."

"I have feared this," said Phyllis, after a pause, "and yet hoped it was a passing fancy on your part."

"Am I given to passing fancies?"

"Here there has been but little chance of indulging in them, Claude."

"Let us walk a little, Phyllis." He drew her hand through his arm and they sauntered down the garden. "You have somewhat chilled me by saying that you have feared this. Why entertain fear?"

"Because I can read Minnie. She respects and perhaps admires you; but she does not love you."

"She may in time."

"It would be wrong of me, dear Claude, to foster false hopes. I do not think she will ever love you."

"I am most hopeful," he said, but there was a very hopeless look growing in his eyes, "for, of course, I can see that she is weighed down by some grief, and it would not be kind or wise of me to speak to her of love just now. I should not have spoken of it to you if you had not talked of her going. Phyllis—she must not go!"

"Claude, I think it would be better if she left us, great a loss as her going would be to us. A single pang, however acute, is better than a lingering pain."

"Whenever she goes," said Claude, restlessly,

"I must go too."

"That is impossible."

"I can at least be near her."

"My dear, dear Claude," said Phyllis, pausing in her walk and putting her arms around his neck, "do you know what you are saying? When Minnie is gone you must stay here to comfort me."

"I will—if I can," he said, "but I feel my love so great for her that whatever it dictates I must obey them."

He bent his head, kissed her fondly and sadly, and together in silence they returned to the vicarage.

Minnie and the vicar were in the drawing-room, and by their look and manner it was evident that some serious conversation had taken place between them. Its nature, but not its full substance, was by-and-bye imparted to Phyllis when they were alone.

"Minnie," he said, "has been giving me an outline of her history. It is a very sad one. I am less inclined than ever for her to leave us, but her mind is made up."

"But what has she before her?" asked Phyllis.

"She has a profession," replied the vicar, dropping his voice.

"A profession! May I ask what it is?"

"The stage."

Phyllis started and her colour slightly changed.

It was not her fault if she had a very common prejudice against those who strut their brief hours upon the stage. The blame lies between a narrow-minded section of the public and the less worthy members of a very high profession. Nobody with any sense of what is right can be blind to the fact that the stage is not so pure as its most fervent supporters would have us believe, nor is it so utterly foul as the rabid haters of all enjoyment declare.

There is a body of people who seem to make a distinction between seeing an actor on the stage and off it. They will go to the theatres and applaud what they see, and carry home with them the memory of pleasantly spent hours, but they would not for the world be seen talking to those who have given them that pleasure, or it may be elevated their thoughts and expanded their better nature. The prejudice exists and is too often justifiable.

But the feeling with Phyllis was but momentary. She had seen much of Minnie—had obtained an insight into her noble nature, and had learnt to love her.

"I could not see her otherwise than she is," she said, "but I wish she had another calling."

"In our small sphere," replied the vicar, "we see very little of the world, and therefore have to trust to others for a knowledge of many things. Much has been written to prejudice people against actors, more especially in the class of literature that comes under our notice."

"It must be unjust."

"The most charitable of it has a bias, and actors do not often rush into print. When they do their efforts are not conspicuously successful. They can only give an answer on the stage."

"Of which we see so little."

"I never had any taste for it. Lynncastle has some good acting in it occasionally, but I never spent an hour in its theatre. I have been neglectful of my duty perhaps in not doing so."

"Now that we have said so much," said Phyllis, "I must tell you all. Claude has fallen in love with Minnie."

"That is a mistake," said the vicar, with a troubled look. "I do not think such a union would be desirable."

"Are you also prejudiced?"

"No; but I do not think Minnie has any love for Claude. Indeed I am sure she has not. Her heart is with the dead."

"She has lost her love then?"

"I may confide in you, Phyllis. She has lost more. It was her husband who was killed at Wratham Junction."

"Minnie married! She has no ring."

"She was wedded, but scarce a wife. I can tell you no more than that a rupture followed the union, and it was not healed when death divided them for ever in this world."

"Claude must know of this," said Phyllis, firmly. "It will help him to bear a separation from her."

"You had better tell her," said the vicar, "but mind that you speak no word to Minnie showing that I have so far betrayed her confidence."

This resolution came too late. Already that which had better been left unsaid was spoken. Claude had told the story of his love and learned how little return he could hope for.

Minnie was in the library reading when he came in with a set purpose in his mind. He had seen her enter there, and with lover-like persistence refused to accept the warning Phyllis had given him. She might not love him, but she would perhaps give him one ray of hope, and on that he could rest, so he believed, for a time, or if need be for years.

"Minnie," he said, taking a seat beside her, "will you lay aside your book for a few minutes? I have something to say to you."

There was no fluttering in her movements, nothing conscious in her look, as she obeyed him. Had he been wise he would have said no more. But when did wisdom go hand in hand with love at such a time? He rushed forward to his doom.

"Is it true, Minnie," he said, "that you are determined to leave us?"

"I must leave you sooner or later," she replied, "and already I have stayed too long."

"Do you wish to go? Are you tired of us?"

"Oh! no—no. How can I be tired of a place that gives me a rest I have never known before? But life cannot be passed by people like me in slothful ease. I must work."

"But could you not work here?"

"Not as I labour," she said, with her eyes fixed dreamily in the fire. "My lot lies in far different scenes."

"More pleasing perhaps. Our life is not congenial to you."

"Have I not told you that I must leave here with deep regret?"

"But have you reflected how deep will the regret be of those you must leave behind?"

"I know that in the kindness of your hearts," she said, looking frankly at him, with fearless, unsuspecting eyes—he ought to have taken warning then, if not before; but he would not—"you cannot but feel a parting from anyone you love. Such natures as yours can but be sorry to part with me; but I must go."

"Have you thought," said Claude, hurriedly, "that in deserting us you may leave more than common anguish behind you? Do you know what I shall feel when you are gone?"

She was fully awake now to what was coming, and shrank back with a pitying look upon her face. She would rather have parted from him in anger than have left him in pain.

"Minnie," he said, trembling in his agitation, "I have loved you from the first hour we met. In tracing back the sweet days and hours I have spent with you I find it to be so. I am rich, as the world goes, and if I can offer you nothing more than wealth and a heart that must beat for you while I live you will not turn from me?"

But she had turned from him, not in anger but in anguish, and covered her face with her hands. Any story but this would have been more welcome.

"I know," he continued, "that there is little advantage to you in marrying a frivolous fellow like me, and I fear that you do not love me. But with you to aid and help me I shall become a wiser and a better man, and love will come in time—"

"Oh! do not pain me more," she said. "I am deeply sorry for this. I feel that I have done an injury to you all by coming here—that my presence has cast a cloud upon a bright and happy home. Claude—friend—brother, I cannot listen to you."

"Perhaps I have been abrupt. Let me withdraw it, and by-and-bye I will speak again—"

"It can never be," she said, and now her tears were falling fast, "never—NEVER!"

He stood up like one who has received a sentence of banishment from all he loves and holds dear, with his eyes dim and his lips quivering, but he could not go without another word.

"I had no idea that you loved another," he said; "it is so, I suppose?"

"Such love as I had," she replied, "has been given and lost."

"Why, then, if you have been deceived—"

"Him that I loved lies in the grave. I wear this," touching her mourning, "for my father and my husband!"

He reeled back a step, and all the light of life for a moment left his face. It seemed as if he would swoon or die, but he rallied, and with a cry knelt at her feet.

"Forgive me," he said, as he took her hand and raised it to his lips, "I did not know. How could I tell that you had known such sorrow?"

"Leave me, Claude," she said.

And he, touching her hand again with his lips, rose up and left the room, suddenly grown old in sorrow and bearing a burden that was like a mountain on his stalwart shoulders, a burden that was not to be lifted up for many a weary day.

In a little while the vicar came to Minnie and found her quiet. She had the story of Claude's love to tell him, and it was told in a few simple

words. Her duty was clear before her. She must leave the vicarage without delay.

"You do it for our sakes," said the vicar, sadly, "but whither will you go, my child?"

"I can pick up the thread of my life where it was broken when first we met," she answered.

"But you will let us know where you go, my child?"

"Will it be right of me to do so? I would confide in you—"

"Confide in me then, and should you need a friend write. You will promise that?"

"I will promise to write to you," she replied. "The memory of the friends I have met will be the silver lining to the dark cloud of my life. Let me go early and not see poor Claude again."

All was arranged quietly, and at an early hour on the following morning Minnie and the vicar stole away to catch the first up train to Lynncastle.

Claude had passed a night of wakefulness and had only just fallen into the deep slumber of prostration, so that he heard nothing of their going. Phyllis had bidden Minnie adieu in her chamber, and watched her going from the window with many bitter tears.

Poddleton Magna was pretty but dull, and the vicar's daughter had no real companions among its people. Minnie had supplied a want of her heart, and now Minnie was gone, leaving a greater void than before.

"But we may meet again," she thought, hopefully. "Minnie may tire of the world, and I may not always remain here."

When Claude appeared and learnt that Minnie was gone he said nothing, but appeared resigned. There was no lachrymose show of grief, and to those outside his home he showed his usual smiling face. When the vicar returned he did not even question him, nor did he speak to them of Minnie again.

It was a hopeful sign in the vicar's eyes, but Phyllis would have preferred if he had talked much of her. If he had raved a little she would have been pleased, for violent emotions are for the most part ephemeral and soon pass away.

But instinct told her the less he said the more earnestly he thought about her. Her instinct was not at fault, for a few days later he suddenly disappeared from home, leaving a letter behind him simply stating that he had obeyed the dictates of his heart and had gone to find Minnie, "in whose presence he alone could live."

"What are we to do now?" asked the vicar, sadly.

"We can do nothing," replied Phyllis, "but wait the issue of events. Any opposition we might offer to the course he has taken, or any persuasion we might use to induce him to abandon it, would only be adding so much fuel to the fire."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HEIR OF MURIEL HALL.

If I had hated in me, if my heart,
Stung by a sense of injury, deep and strong,
Sought but to recompense thee wrong with wrong,
Here could I come and learn the better part.

THERE was a new lord of Muriel Hall, and he was expected to come and take possession of his home, but the coming in was to be the occasion of no ceremony and no display.

This was unusual, for the lord of Muriel had a princely income, and was naturally expected to spend it in a becoming manner. Though many of the ancient ceremonies had long become obsolete, the tenantry and the servants, without reckoning the multifarious hangers-on of the place and the labouring classes, expected a new lord to give them a dinner, a dance and fireworks in the evening. Therefore, when it was known that he who had just inherited the title of Lord Thesiger with the estates attached to this name had declined to participate in or to permit any such festivity he struck the key note to unpopularity, and ominous whispers were soon afloat concerning him.

He was a stranger to the people, being cousin to the late lord, with whom he had not been on very intimate terms. It was a feature of the Thesiger family that they never were on a friendly footing with each other. Fathers quarrelled with sons, uncles with nephews, and cousin with cousin, but the house, notwithstanding its being divided against itself, managed to stand and to keep together one of the best rent-rolls in the kingdom.

The day appointed for the coming of the new lord was not a very inviting one. It was a bleak day early in March, when a frosty night was followed by daylight chilled by an east wind. The season was backward—very few leaves were to be seen, and in the hollows and under the hedges patches of the winter's snow still lingered, "waiting for more to come," as the simply county folk declared.

The new lord arrived at the station and drove through the village in a closed carriage. Curiosity kept a number of people to see him go by, and they were rewarded with a glimpse of his features.

He was young, handsome, and with an air of melancholy that might have enlisted their sympathies at any other time. Now, disappointed of their festivity, they were disposed to be sullen and let him go by in silence.

His servants received him with befitting humility, and the lordly halls of Muriel were rich with warmth and comfort, but the servants were disappointed too, and were not so demonstrative of their loyalty as they might have been.

"He is too sad," they said among themselves, "we shall have another hermit Lord Thesiger, like the one at the end of the last century, who shut himself up alone in Muriel, only seeing people on rent day, when he exacted the last farthing, and hid away the money goodness knows where."

There had always been a belief, but it had died away somewhat of late years, that there was a secret vault under the hall filled with gold stored away by the hermit lord of eighty years ago. But as those in authority took no steps to search for it, and those without authority dared not do so, the truth or falsity of the legend had not been decided.

So melancholy times were looked forward to, and there was some talk among the upper servants of seeking a more lively situation, when, lo! the melancholy lord began to show that he was not made of miserly stuff.

First of all he called up his tenants separately, apologised for not being in the humour for mirth himself, and bade them select a day and choose how they would spend it. Muriel and its grounds were at their service. All he begged of them was that for the present they would excuse his presence.

To the servants he soon proved himself a liberal master, giving very little trouble and raising the wages of all some twenty-five per cent. without any application being made from them. He also gave them permission to unite with the tenantry to make the day of festivity successful throughout, and appointed the butler as master of the ceremonies, with discretion as to the wine and beer to be used on the occasion.

This brought about a revulsion of feeling, and as in addition Lord Thesiger received the county families who called upon him and returned their calls, hope grew strong in the domestic and agricultural breasts, and good time was seen to be looming in the distance.

"When my lord shakes off his melancholy," said the butler, "he will be one of the gayest."

"It is love," sighed the housekeeper, "and we must wait for him to marry."

A day was appointed, and in the interval pending its arrival Lord Thesiger spent the daylight hours inspecting his estate, unaccompanied by a steward, preferring to see for himself what the tenants needed and making his own notes of their wants. The farmers and labourers were treated alike in this respect and much neglect of the past was to be atoned for.

The men already liked him, and would have liked him more if the women had not talked so much about his handsome face and the sweet

melancholy of his eyes. Jealousy is a weed that will grow on almost any soil, and the honest yeomen, albeit no great cultivators of it, felt angry with their wives for being so "moonstruck," as they indignantly termed it.

"Of course he's handsome," they said; "there never was a Thesiger as wasn't, but his looks have nout to do with thee. As for these wenches of ours," alluding to sundry buxom daughters, "they'd better not think of him, for no good can come of such vanities."

Still the girls thought of him, and some of a feeble literary turn of mind wrote weak sonnets in his praise which they read to each other and would have sent to him if they dared, and the more defiant of them read their productions to their sweethearts, thereby bringing about sundry delightful quarrels and sweet makings-up of the usual order.

At length the day came for the great feast which was not to have its lord at its head, and my lord himself left very early, taking the train to Hartborough, a market-town some twenty miles distant. He had no object in going there, except to get out of the way of rejoicings not in harmony with the sadness of his soul.

For he was sad indeed. Not with a maudlin melancholy, but with a true sorrow. In the not very distant past he had known grief of the order that troubles us most, arising from a love that he believed to be misplaced.

"If she had been but honest," he thought, as he paced the platform, waiting for the train, "what unfiled corner of my heart could there be this day?"

The "if she had been honest" had been softly breathed by him many, many times, but never with a sadder feeling than that which was in him then. "If she had been," but then she had not been, and with a "Pshaw! what a fool I am!" he lighted a cigar and sought to toss his sorrow to the winds.

He was a man of commanding presence, yet not commanding in his ways. He inspired respect by reason of his being a true gentleman, but he had none of that hauteur erroneously associated with the upper ten. The frowning brow and the haughty mien are now only conspicuous in that class of drama where the bold baron and usurper of kingly rights struts upon the stage, and in gentlemen of wealth acquired by successful business or speculation, who are afraid of not being taken for gentlemen, and so frown upon all the public lest any member of it should be too familiar.

The porter at the station did not know him, and when the train came in he quickly took his seat in the smoking compartment of a carriage where there was only one other passenger—a man of florid countenance, rich and gaudy apparel and much jewellery.

He had a free-and-easy air about him, and was disposed to be friendly. Lord Thesiger did not accept or reject his addresses, he simply endured them with well-bred quietude.

By-and-bye he began to talk about his affairs, as such men invariably do, and acquainted Lord Thesiger with the fact that he had become lessee of the Hartborough Theatre, a business that was new to him.

"It is a business in which money may be lost, I believe," said Lord Thesiger, quietly.

"I believe you," said the other, "but I am not going to lose any. While the house pays I keep it open, as soon as it doesn't I shut it."

"But you would have more consideration for your company?"

"Not I. Why should I? They would have none for me if they could get better pay. No, I look upon it as a commercial affair. I've got money, I don't deny it, for I've had a lot left to me, but I want good interest. Now I've just picked up a gal—"

"I beg pardon," said Lord Thesiger, "a what?"

"A young lady," said the other, slightly abashed, "with a fair figure and voice for tender parts, such as I never met before. She's very hard up, which is all the better for me, as I shall be able to engage her for two years or so, if she's anything of a bit. We open with her to-night as Miss Haller in the 'Stranger.'"

"A melancholy piece."

"So it is, but we begin and end with a farce, so there is no cause for anybody to complain."

Lord Thesiger shuddered; a farce before and after the "Stranger" was something horrible to contemplate. He said little more, and allowed his travelling companion to rattle on good-naturedly, avoiding any show of weariness.

The stranger's name was Julius Brown, and he was especially proud of the Julius. It is more than probable than he would never have forgiven a man who sent him a letter simply addressed to J. Brown, and he showed Lord Thesiger a bill in which his name appeared in letters three inches deep, while even the star of the company was only honoured with letters one third that size.

On arriving at Hartborough the two travellers separated. Julius Brown engaged a fly, and calling out "Theatre" was driven away, lying back on the cushions with an air of almost regal ease. Lord Thesiger quietly strolled into the town, found his way to the chief hotel and ordered luncheon.

He was a stranger to all there, although the title he inherited was familiar enough. But he kept in the background and received no more homage from the waiter than is usually accorded to gentlemen who order a chop and a pint of pale sherry to be ready at two o'clock.

He had come there to kill time, and Hartborough offered but little to the stranger in the way of sight-seeing.

It had an old church or two, a fragment of a ruined abbey and the new town hall. There was literally nothing else, unless it was found in the inhabitants, who were a stolid, slow people, much given to standing at the shop doors and dozing behind the counter.

The bills relating to the theatre were posted on the walls and displayed in barbers' shops and public-house windows.

Lord Thesiger paused to read one of them and found that the promised star was a Miss Ada Moore, who was that night to play Juliet to the Romeo of a Mr. Percy Agincourt.

Lord Thesiger's face wore a smile as he turned away from the glowing announcement, and in a meditative mood in which mirth mingled with melancholy he sauntered back to the hotel.

His chop and sherry were ready, and he lingered over his luncheon until past three. Then he further gratified the waiter by ordering dinner at seven and sauntered out again.

Without any guide he found his way to the theatre and saw that some preparation for the evening was going on. People were hurrying in and out the stage door and there were the usual seedy, mildewed men hanging about on the chance of getting an engagement as suppers.

Lord Thesiger did not linger there, but passed on to the outside of the town, walking hurriedly as if he would fain leave something loathsome behind him.

But the theatre had a fascination for him. Returning at seven to dinner he partook of it with some haste and then hastened to see Romeo and Juliet, taking a seat in a box that commanded a view of both the stage and the house. He sat back in the shade, desiring to see and not be seen.

The attendance was not very good for a first night. Either Hartborough had no taste for legitimate plays, or had no money to spare, or had doubts of the fare provided by Mr. Julius Brown. Whatever the cause the house was very thin—fifty in the pit, about the same number in the gallery, and half a dozen or so in the boxes.

In one of the latter Lord Thesiger speedily became interested. A handsome man of two or three and twenty sat in the centre with his eyes eagerly and lingeringly fixed upon the curtain, heedless of the noise and laughter and the "chaffing" going on in the pit and gallery.

"Now who may you be, my young friend?" thought Lord Thesiger. "Either you have not been to a theatre before, or—there is somebody behind that curtain in whom you are interested, the somebody being a woman, of course."

He smiled again, a little bitterly this time, for he had tasted the sweetness and bitterness of

love. Perhaps he had known something of the love that has the footlights to put a deceptive mist between the lover and the loved.

A meagre orchestra played some feeble music, which, however, was generously applauded, and the curtain rose upon Romeo and Juliet. Lord Thesiger had timed his arriving so as to escape being afflicted with the first farce, and did not meditate waiting for the second. He had strolled in to see Shakespeare in the provinces and Miss Ada Moore. The name of that lady had a most unaccountable fascination for him.

Nothing of any moment occurred until Juliet appeared, and her coming was the signal for an ovation from the pit and gallery. The occupants of those places knew nothing of the actress, but as she had been announced to them as a star of the first magnitude they were willing to accept her as such until she proved to be something inferior, or sank, as stars too often do, to mere nebule.

Her beauty alone would have gained their sympathies. The sweet face and gentle manners, the grace, the rich, soft tone of voice were all in keeping with the character of Juliet. She began tremulously, but soon gained nerve, and ere long had forgotten the audience in front and was absorbed in her share of the delineation.

And he who sat in the centre box was absorbed in her. With his arms resting on the front he fixed his eyes upon her, his ears drinking in the sweet sound of her voice. When she spoke he was all ears, when she ceased he had none. The play was nothing to him. It was to see her that he had come, to listen to the voice of sweet but dangerous power—for others or their share in the moving scenes before him he had no thought or care.

Lord Thesiger had been moved by her coming too. As she appeared her beauty seemed to electrify him. For a moment he leant forward eagerly, unobserved by her, then he drew back into the deepest shade and emerged no more during the play.

But not alone in her was he absorbed. His eyes wandered alternately from her to the eager watcher in the centre box, too lost in admiration to think that his infatuation could not but be apparent to any observer.

There was a dark frown on the face of Lord Thesiger as he scanned the eager, handsome face, and he watched Juliet closely to see if he could find any responsive look in her.

But he watched in vain.

Either she had no knowledge of him, or was too absorbed in her acting to heed his eager glances. Lord Thesiger charged it to the cunning of a woman.

"She is leading him on," he muttered, "and he will go, though he may know that he is going to destruction. Poor boy!"

Miss Ada Moore did not play in the last piece, although many a Juliet of a sparse company has had to do her share of the following farce, and when the curtain fell Lord Thesiger slipped out of the theatre and crossing the road took up his stand in a dark archway from which he could command a view of the stage door. A minute later and he of the eager face was waiting there.

"I might have known it," muttered Lord Thesiger—"the old story. A wily woman and a fool. And yet with such a face and look would not a man feel ready to swear that she is as pure as the angels? How these women must laugh at us."

Several people, with no taste for farce as a final intellectual dish, were coming slowly out, discoursing the merits of the star of the evening. Lord Thesiger could hear them discussing her as they sauntered down the street, and all they had to say was favourable. For the most part they were enthusiastic.

"The shallow-pated fool I travelled here with was right," muttered Lord Thesiger; "even he could see there was the material to make money in her. But he treats her only in a commercial sense, as something to buy and speculate in, and he is right. It must be a blessing to possess such a nature as his—no fine sensitiveness, and, therefore, none of the keener pangs that afflict others—none of the pangs that I have known."

He drew near to the entrance of the archway, and leaning against the wall looked moodily at the young fellow, who stood still as a dog upon the watch by the stage door.

"I have it in my heart to go to that poor fool and warn him," he muttered, "but would he heed me? No. He must run his course and find out the end for himself."

The stage door now opened, and he hurriedly drew back. A fragile figure clothed in the sombre garments of mourning came out. The grace of her movements showed that it could be no other than the Juliet of the evening. She was joined, in truth, by him without, and they went hurriedly down the street together.

Lord Thesiger followed, his cheeks burning with anger and shame as he did so, but he seemed to be impelled forward by some secret, irresistible power.

"With what object?" he muttered. "In what way will it serve me?"

They walked swiftly, but he had no difficulty in keeping up with them. They crossed the market place, turned into a narrow street, from there into a passage, and then he lost them.

When he arrived at the dismal entrance there was no sound of footsteps or voices to guide him. Whither had they gone? Had they increased their pace so as to get clear of the passage ere he reached it, or had they entered one of the dingy houses that stood dark and silent on either side?

"I have lost my quarry," he muttered, when he had paced the passage twice from end to end, "but to-morrow I will take up the chase again."

(To be Continued.)

BEARDS.

THE Assyrians wore beards; the Egyptians did not. They have been worn for centuries by the Jews, who were forbidden to mar their beards, 1490 B.C. The Tartars waged a long war with the Persians, declaring them infidels because they would not cut their beards after the customs of Tartary. The Greeks wore beards till the time of Alexander, who ordered the Macedonians to be shaved, lest the beard should give a handle to their enemies when fighting at close quarters. This was 330 B.C. Beards were worn by the Romans 390 B.C. In England they were not fashionable after the Conquest, in 1066, until the thirteenth century, and were discontinued at the Restoration. Peter the Great enjoined the Russians even of rank to shave, but was obliged to keep officers on foot to cut off the beard by force.

Since 1851 the custom of wearing the beard has greatly increased in Great Britain.

A bearded woman was taken by the Russians at the battle of Pultowa and presented to the Czar, Peter the First, in 1427; her beard measured a yard and a half. The Great Margaret, Governess of the Netherlands, had a very long, stiff beard. Mdlle. Bois de Chene, born at Geneva, it was said, in 1834, was exhibited in London in 1852-3, when consequently eighteen years of age. She had a profuse head of hair, a strong black beard, large whiskers, thick hair on her arms, and had masculine features.

THE LONGEST SPEECH.

THE longest speech on record is believed to have been made by Dr. De Cosmos in the Legislature of British Columbia, when a measure was pending which would take from a great many settlers their land. De Cosmos was in a hopeless minority. The job had been held back till the close of the session, and unless legislation was taken before noon of a given day the act would fail. The day before De Cosmos got the floor at 10 a.m. and began to speak against the bill.

Its friends cared little, for they supposed that

by one or two o'clock he would be through and the bill put on its passage. One o'clock came and he was speaking still. Two o'clock—he was saying "in the second place." Three o'clock—he produced a fearful bundle of papers, and insisted on reading them.

The majority began to have suspicions—he was going to speak till the next noon and kill the bill. For awhile they became merry over it, but as it came on to dusk they got alarmed. They tried interruptions, but soon abandoned them, because each one afforded him a chance to digress and to rest.

They tried to shout him down, but that gave him a breathing space, and finally they settled down to watch the combat between strength of will and weakness of body. They gave him no mercy; no adjournment for dinner; no chance to do more than to wet his lips with water; no wandering from the subject; no sitting down. Members slipped out to eat in relays, and returned to sleep, but De Cosmos went on. The speaker was alternately dozing and trying to look wide awake.

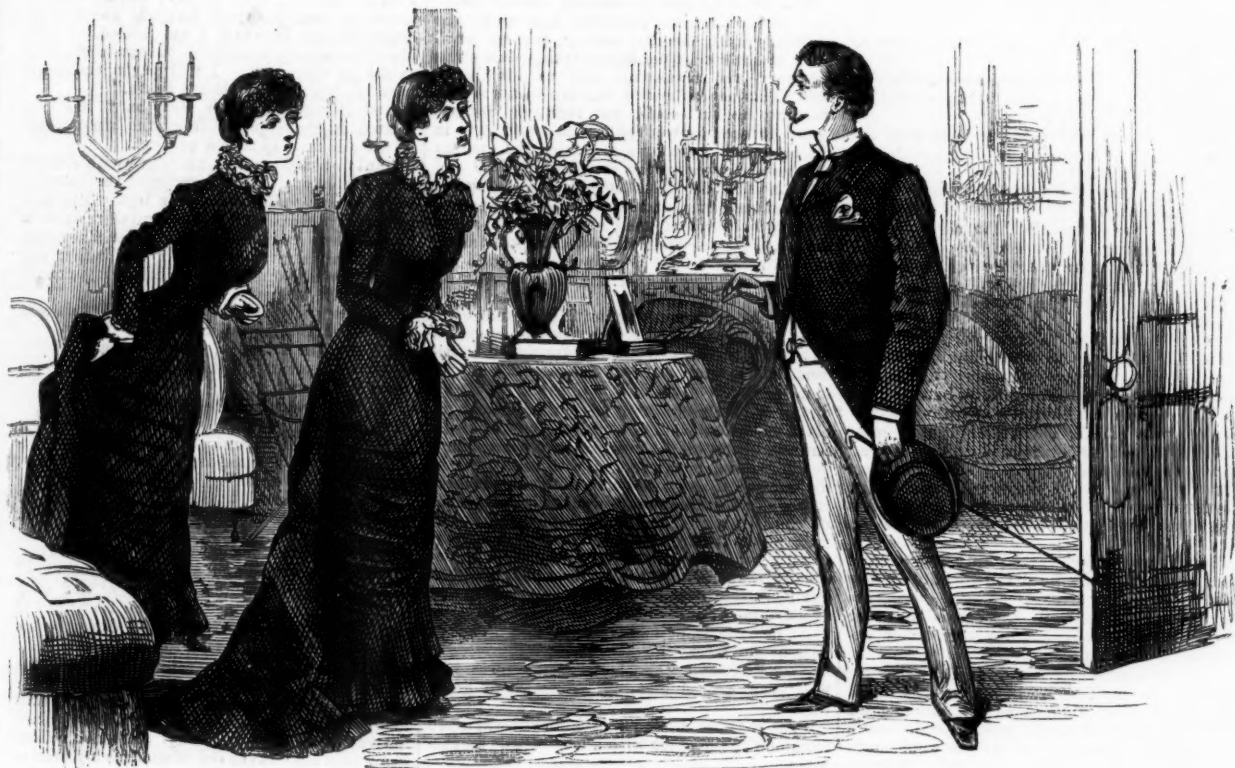
Day dawned and the majority slipped out in squads to wash and breakfast, and De Cosmos kept on. It can't be said it was a very logical, eloquent, or coherent speech. There were repetitions and digressions; but still he kept on until noon came to a baffled majority, livid with rage and impotence, and a single man was triumphant, though his voice had sunk to a husky whisper, his bloodshot eyes were nearly shut, his legs tottered, and his baked lips were cracked and bloody. He had spoken twenty-six hours, and saved the settlers their lands.

JERUSALEM AND ITS INHABITANTS.

ACCORDING to a letter from Jerusalem, printed recently in a contemporary, there are many persons in the city who hold extreme or fanciful views on religious topics. Eighteen Americans, it is said, arrived there recently to await the second coming of the Lord. They are respectable, educated, and apparently wealthy persons, and are to be followed by others. For many years a half-crazy Englishman, dressed in grave clothes, and carrying a wooden cross on his shoulders, was wont to address crowds of people in the market-places of the city. He recently died of fever. A German woman, who regarded herself as "the bride of Christ," and who had prepared costly dresses in which to receive her Lord, went away to the Jordan recently and never returned. She died and was buried by the natives. A young man is now in Jerusalem to whom it has been revealed that the Ark of the Covenant is buried in what is known as the Potter's Field. He is searching for it assiduously. Another, who is described as "a rather gentlemanlike young Jew," has arrived at Jerusalem, and claims to be the Messiah.

These instances are sad indeed, and it is pleasant to turn to what is comparatively a brighter side of religious life in Jerusalem. Of the Jews the correspondent writes as follows:—"Many Jews have arrived here from Bulgaria and Russia and many more are expected—it is said about eight hundred—an important and embarrassing addition to our already overcrowded Jewish quarter. On the whole the Jews have a good time in Jerusalem, and were it not for their poverty would be perfectly happy. They live according to their own laws, have their own 'house of judgment,' marry and divorce in their own fashion, and the Chief Rabbi has even the right of requesting the civil authorities to arrest any of his people."

THE experimental works at the Channel tunnel boring, at Shakespeare Cliff, Dover, are progressing very satisfactorily. It is found that the lower the works proceed the less is the quantity of water which finds its way through into the tunnel, and the operations are now carried on in comparative dryness.



[FRANK RECOILED A STEP AND HIS EYES WANDED FROM ONE TO THE OTHER.]

SCARCELY SINNING.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Fear, guilt, despair, and moon-struck frenzy, rush
On our voluntary death; the wise, the brave,
When the fierce storms of fortune round 'em roar
Combat the billows with redoubled force.

VERY warm and earnest were the thanks Charles Chepstow proffered to Frank Leslie when the last explosion was over.

"You have saved my life," he said. "How can I thank you sufficiently?"

"Do not name it," returned Leslie. "I had been less than man had I not fulfilled so manifest a duty. Beside, I told you that I wished to preserve those nearly related to me from the stain of great guilt."

"True; I remember," said Chepstow, "although I do not see how it can be, for your name you say is Leslie, while these goods were shipped by the firm of Dawson and Co.—a house capable of any iniquity," he added, bitterly.

"Yes," assented Frank, in a gloomy tone, "Yet, to my sorrow, the partners are near of kin to me."

"Indeed!" cried Chepstow. "Then I must relinquish any idea of vengeance. Out of gratitude to you I will not bring them to the felon's cell, although they richly deserve it. I will content myself with calling upon them and giving them a piece of my mind on my return."

"You return at once, I suppose?"

"Certainly not," said Chepstow, in some surprise. "I have signed articles for the voyage and shall conduct the Albatross to her destination and back again, if Providence be pro-

pitious. Because one consignee is a traitor and a rogue that is no reason why a score of innocent consignees should suffer inconvenience and delay."

While, however, Chepstow decided to continue his outward-bound voyage Frank resolved on putting the Seamew about and making the best of his way to England. Blood is proverbially thicker than water, and despite the evil lives led by his father and brother, and their harsh treatment of himself, Leslie determined to give them warning of the tempest which might at any time break over them.

The return voyage was quickly made, and paying off his yacht Frank made the best of his way into his hotel.

He found many letters there waiting for him, amongst them one the perusal of which almost made his heart stand still.

It was addressed to "Frank Leslie, Esq.," and thus it ran:

"DEAR FRANK,—Will you, at the earliest opportunity, come to see me at Woodbine Cottage, near Lovelace Manor? I have many important matters to talk to you about."

"MIRANDA LOVELACE."

It was evening now. Frank determined to visit his father's office early next morning and warn him of the collapse of his iniquitous scheme, making his way to the cottage later in the day.

The note puzzled him greatly. He had, as he supposed, received his congé from Miranda, who had unblushingly avowed her intention of bestowing her hand on his brother Simon.

Now, while his heart was still sore within him at the apparent baseness of her conduct, came this note, calmly summoning him to her presence.

The whole affair was inexplicable.

Early next morning Frank made his way to Bevis Marks. His father and brother were both in the inner office.

Frank sent in his name, and after a prolonged interval of waiting at length found himself in their presence.

The greetings on both sides were of the coldest, Simon looking his brother insolently in the face, saying, presently:

"I can guess your business, my immaculate Paul. It is something about the girl Lovelace. You may save yourself all trouble on the point. My wife she is to be, and my wife she shall be."

Turning from Simon contemptuously Frank Leslie—or, to give him his right name, Paul Dawson—addressed himself to the old man.

"Father," he said, sternly, "I demand to know the nature of your connection with the Lovelace family and what is the hold that Simon has over them."

The old man laughed sneeringly.

"I daresay you do, Paul," he replied, tauntingly, "but you must remember you are no member of the firm, nor entitled to participate in the firm's secrets."

"Father," said Paul, softly, "I would be on terms of amity and friendship with you and my brother also if it be possible; therefore, I ask you for this information as a favour. I am your son—your firstborn—surely the boon I ask is a small one."

"Small or great you will get no boons, as you call them, granted by me. My son you may be—I do not doubt it—but you are not of the true stock. The contamination of the Gentile blood is too strong in your veins. You opposed my will by word and deed when you were under my roof. You left that roof of your own accord. Henceforth I wish to have no converse with you. Let me never see your face again. Starve, beg, hang yourself. Only relieve me of your presence."

Paul's brow contracted.

"Listen, father," he said. "I require an answer to my question as to your influence over Miss Lovelace. I require and will have it."

"WILL?"

"Yes—will."

"If you do not at once leave this office, Paul, I will call a policeman to remove you."

"I will not leave it without an answer to my question."

"Simon," said the old man, "tell Jones to call a police officer."

Simon obeyed, and already had his hand on the handle of the door leading to the outer office when Paul said, calmly:

"Hold! do not invoke the assistance of the law, lest I may be also induced to invoke it, and then you are both lost men."

"Who are you trying to humbug?" cried Simon, insolently.

"Silence!" exclaimed Paul, in a stern voice. Then, addressing his father, he proceeded, solemnly: "You must grant me my request, for you and Simon are in my power."

"What mean you?" said the old man, in an agitated voice.

"In few words this. A few mornings ago I was in the waiting-room when you and Simon came in here. I overheard your vile plot to blow up the Albatross and destroy her crew. I rushed away at once, chartered a yacht, and followed in her track. I overtook her in mid-Atlantic. The time determined for the infernal contrivance had nearly expired. I boarded her. With my own hands I consigned some of the machines to the deep. The terrific explosions which followed showed I was not a minute too soon."

The old man's face turned an ashen hue as Paul spoke, and his head fell forward on the desk.

Simon in the meanwhile had opened a drawer in the writing-table, and appeared to be extricating something from a case.

"Captain Chepstow," resumed Paul, "out of gratitude for my rescue will preserve silence if I desire it. Near kindred as you are to me I know that you deserve no mercy for the mean and cowardly assassination that you would have perpetrated. But I will be merciful. Upon a solemn promise from you and Simon that you will never again attempt such a crime, and upon your giving me all information with regard to the Lovelace property, and Simon's withdrawing his claim to Miss Lovelace's hand, I will preserve silence relative to your guilt."

"I will insure your silence, traitor and spy!" shouted Simon, suddenly.

The next instant the barrel of a revolver glittered in the sun and a bullet whizzed by Frank's head.

Four other reports followed in rapid succession, and had Simon been cool and steady doubtless his brother's life had paid the penalty of his bold speaking.

But only one bullet took effect in the fleshy part of the young man's left arm.

Meanwhile old Dawson had risen from his chair, his countenance convulsed, and horrible to look on.

The noise of the firing had aroused the clerks, and one of them having opened the intervening door they all crowded to the doorway.

Simon's face was contorted with mad passion, and he glared at his brother with vindictive hate.

"Curse you!" he hissed. "Have you a charmed life? You have been my bane, Paul, but you shall never consign me to a felon's cell."

As he spoke he turned the muzzle of the pistol to his mouth. There was a sharp report, and the next moment he fell forward a dead weight prone upon his face.

With a blood-curdling scream the old man tottered across the floor and sank upon his son's body.

When they lifted him he also was no more.

CHAPTER XLIV.

It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me.

For a long time Frank Leslie, or rather Paul Dawson, stood as one paralysed before the corpses of his father and brother.

Presently the police, who had been summoned

by one of the clerks, appeared upon the scene, and their presence forced him to rouse himself.

By a strong effort he obliged himself to go through the needful formalities and make the necessary arrangements, and it was not until after midday that he again turned his steps westward and made his way to his hotel. Shaken as he was by the terrible events of the morning he still could not resist an intense desire to see his beloved again. And late in the afternoon he took a train for her vicinity and made his way to the cottage.

He inquired for Miss Lovelace, following the terms of the letter, and Mrs. Chepstow, who was the only inhabitant of the cottage, informed him that she believed that she was at the Manor; at least, Hesba had been invited to visit her there that morning and had been absent all day.

Paul did not know much of Hesba and some other matters of which Mrs. Chepstow spoke, but he comprehended that he should find Miranda at the Manor and that was sufficient for him.

And thither accordingly he turned his steps, his mind as he walked rapidly along being a strange chaos of contradictions. Sorrow and joy, hope and fear wrestled with each other in his excited brain. One moment tears for his father's and brother's fate would fill his eyes, to be chased away the next moment by a bright smile at the thought that Miranda was returning to her allegiance, this idea being immediately dispelled by the gloomy thought that her last utterance had been too determined and decisive to admit of hope of change.

At last the Manor was reached, and he was at once ushered into the drawing-room.

As he entered two black-robed figures who had been seated side by side rose to greet him.

Paul recoiled a step and his eyes wandered from one to the other with a look of wild amazement.

For what did he see?

Two Mirandas, alike in every form of outward seeming—alike in expression—alike in smile.

Presently one took a step in advance, and, holding out her hand, said:

"Frank!"

"Miranda!" was the response, as he took it, with a tender clasp, his eyes beaming with love.

"Miss Chepstow—Mr. Leslie," she said, making the introduction.

Frank bowed, and the two seated themselves, the young man's mind still in confusion at the wondrous likeness of the two women.

He experienced a slight feeling of discontent that there should be a witness to their interview, which however he was forced to stifle.

For some moments there was a silence. It seemed that no one cared to open the conversation.

At last Miranda spoke.

"Frank," she said, "Heaven has been good to me. I never expected to see your face in life again."

"Yet you dismissed me very summarily the other day," said Frank, some feeling of latent irritation still remaining in his heart.

"That shall be explained. I have a long and strange story to tell you, and I have solicited Miss Chepstow's presence because she has been an actor in a part of it. You must be patient, for I promise you the recital will be long and trying for you."

"Everything relating to you must be of the most vivid interest to me, Miranda," responded the young man.

"You are looking pale," said Miranda, anxiously looking at him. "You have journeyed from town and are tired. Let me offer you some refreshment."

And ringing the bell she directed the servant who answered to bring in some wine.

Then settling herself in her chair she said to Paul:

"The position in which both Miss Chepstow and myself are placed is a very exceptional and trying one. We are partly the creatures of cir-

cumstance and partly those of our own foolishness. Whether you and I can ever be happy or not, Frank, I am not able to say; but at least, in justice to you, you must be made aware of the circumstances in which I am placed. I have Miss Chepstow's permission to state them as far as she is concerned. I will begin the recital from the time of my father's death."

And Miranda told her story as it has been related in these pages from the time of her father's demise up to the present.

Paul listened to the narrative with concentrated interest; at the mention of the colonel's letter a half-smile crossed his lips. His brow grew very grave at the incidental relation of the sorrows and wrongs which the Chepstows had sustained at the hands of his father and brother, and especially at Simon's unmanly persecution of Hesba.

At this point he interrupted Miranda and turned to Hesba, querying:

"Miss Chepstow, is your brother Captain Charles Chepstow, at present commanding the barque Albatross?"

Hesba answered in the affirmative.

"I had the pleasure of meeting him a few days ago in mid-Atlantic, and the farther happiness of being of some service to him—in fact, under Heaven, of saving his life."

At this Hesba put some eager, interested questions, to which Paul replied in general terms, without specifying particulars.

Presently Miranda resumed her narrative, relating how Hesba and herself had exchanged identities—during which portion of her story Hesba's face was bathed with the rosy flush of shame—and bringing the recital down to the day of Paul's previous visit to the Manor.

"The rest you know, Frank," she concluded. "Miss Chepstow, having determined to atone for her deception by fulfilling my father's commands by marrying Simon Dawson, had no alternative but to send you away. Her noble sacrifice would have saved the Manor for my brother Lucius. An accidental circumstance, however, revealed to her my existence, and she made to me a full confession. This knowledge is, as you may see, fatal to our peace. I cannot endure that another should sacrifice herself for me and mine. I cannot consent that while I disobey my father's commands another should fulfil them. Read that, Frank," she went on, handing to him Colonel Lovelace's last letter, which she had obtained of Hesba. "Read that, and tell me if it is not imperative that we separate for ever. I must become Simon Dawson's wife."

Paul shook his head with decision, although his face was very grave.

"Not so, Miranda," he said, "that can never be. Listen to me. It is now my turn to tell a story little less marvellous than your own. And to start with a fact that will astound you much, but which I never thought it would be needful for you to know. My name is not Frank Leslie, but Paul Dawson. I am the eldest son of old Mr. Dawson of Bevis Marks and Simon's brother. I was partner in the firm, but I found their dealings were such as an honourable man could not share in. I found them hated by all—execrated by all. I could not go on living thus. Death would be a thousand times preferable to living ostracised by all good and honourable men. At last I could endure it no longer. I fled from home with but scanty funds, and throwing myself on the world changed my name to Leslie, when I made my way to India, where I had not been long when we first met, Miranda."

Then he went on to relate the destruction of Mezerabad, his capture by the dacoits, his escape and return to England.

At the conclusion of his recital he said:

"Nothing can separate us now, Miranda."

"But your brother Simon, Paul?" she faltered.

"Is dead," he replied, solemnly, "suddenly and terribly—and my father also."

At this moment the servant entered, announcing Lucius Lovelace.

The surprise of the young man on entering the room was not less than Paul Dawson's had been. He beheld before him two sisters Mi-

hands, between whom identification seemed impossible.

Controlling her confusion Hesba spoke by a strong effort of will.

"Lucius," she said—"or rather Mr. Lovelace, as I must in future term you—I mark your surprise, which is quite natural. It is mine to confess, with shame, that you have been the victim of an imposture. I am not your sister. My name is Chepstow—Hesba Chepstow; but taking advantage of the strong resemblance between us I have imposed upon you and upon others, and trust to your generosity to forgive it. This is Miss Lovelace," she concluded, indicating Miranda.

Though the girl's face had been suffused with a crimson flush as she spoke it was not altogether one of shame. She was free now—and Lucius was her hero.

The brother and sister exchanged congratulations and Miranda introduced Paul to the former.

Sufficient of their stories was then told to Lucius to render matters intelligible to him, and the quartette formed a happy, contented party for the rest of the day, although his family afflictions naturally threw a shade of gloom over Paul.

The next day the young man made his way to town to attend to the business of the late firm and the funerals of his relatives.

Hesba, accompanied by Miranda, made her way to her mother's cottage. Mrs. Chepstow was as much astonished and puzzled at the apparition of the two girls as Paul and Lucius Lovelace had been. But matters were readily explained to her.

The first day of Hesba's stay at the cottage did not pass over without the appearance of Lucius, who became a regular daily visitor, and whom Hesba did not call Mr. Lovelace, preferring the name which had become familiar to her tongue, while "Hesba" seemed to fall quite as fluently from the young man's lips as "Miranda" did.

The funeral of the two Dawsons being over, the old man's will was read. He left the whole of his large but ill-gotten gains to his younger son Simon, and the proverbial shilling to his elder son Paul. But as the former had died unmarried, and as the elder Dawson had no relatives, save his two sons, the whole property was of necessity inherited by Paul.

There was little joy in his mind at this result. Wealth gathered together as this had been could give little satisfaction to an honest man.

He just ran down to Lovelace Manor to assure Miranda and Lucius that that was saved to them, and to hand over to the young man the title deeds of the mortgaged property, then returned to look over the papers of the firm and ascertain whether any were living to whom he could do justice. There were plenty, and he found his large inheritance materially reduced by the time he had set aside the money of which he considered they had been defrauded by his father and brother.

This done, he resolved to carry on the firm as an honest and trustworthy shipping house, putting it in the hands of a capable manager, and thus obtaining abundant leisure to visit at Lovelace Manor.

Presently a neighbouring mansion and estate came into the market, which gave Paul the opportunity of purchasing a residence in the vicinity of Lovelace Manor.

On the return of Charles Chepstow from his voyage Paul sought him out, and, after dwelling upon the injuries the young man had received at the hands of his family, forced upon him a large sum of money which the sailor was at first reluctant to receive, but ultimately consented for his mother's and younger sister's sake.

Six months after the death of old Dawson and son there was a double wedding at the little ancient church near to Lovelace Manor. The sun shone brightly upon the happy party. Children strewed the churchyard path with flowers, and the lookers-on, one and all, agreed they had never seen two more handsome couples

than Miranda and Paul and Hesba and Lucius.

And as Hesba Lovelace passed from the church porch on her husband's arm it seemed to her that the deception which Providence had overruled to such happiness had been forgiven by a higher Power, and was, perhaps, SCARCELY SINNING.

[THE END.]

HIS STRANGE CLIENT.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"THERE is no romance in my life; all is hard, bare, undeniable fact—a constant struggle for a livelihood, and no pleasure to disturb the constant monotony into anything agreeable. Well, well! A lawyer's life, after all, is as dry and cheerless as a day labourer's when he has to depend on his profession, with no practice worth thinking about. I wish I never were born!"

Vain wish! But then it is a common cry of suffering mortals, who think that by such an event not having transpired they would have been spared the misery which falls to their portion.

Guy Blackstone was despondent, without doubt, as could be understood by the above soliloquy, as he sat in his dingy little office in the city. It seemed at that moment as though everything was in harmony with his thoughts.

The weather was dismal, grey, and storm-threatening, with a heavy mist; the office was in consequence thereof in an undeniable state of gloom, and it seemed as if the constant rumble, clatter and roll of the waggon wheels, horses' hoofs and human voices, had subsided to lend a more quiet and subdued aspect to everything just because he had a fit of "blues." It was very evident from the long face he pulled that there was nothing at all suitable to him in his surroundings.

"It is just six years ago to-day," he muttered, as he lay back in his chair reflectively and stroked his moustache, "that Hazel left me for Will Henderson—he rich, I poor; he handsome, I plain; he wild and dissipated, I an exemplary young man. Oh, had I been endowed with all his attractions I might to-day have been happy, and own a pleasant home with a dear helpmate through life."

He would have continued longer in this sad train of thought had there not come a knock at the door of his sanctum, and a moment later a little old man hobbled into the room, and with a deep sigh sat down on a box.

He was about eighty years of age, bent and yellow, wrinkled, and as irascible as an old gentleman of his age is generally apt to be.

He wore a pair of spectacles on his beak-shaped nose, from behind the glasses of which twinkled a pair of exceedingly sharp blue eyes.

His attire was dark and rusty; he wore a high hat, which might have been bought for him the day he was born, and his thin, beardless throat was encircled by a high, standing collar, and this collar was encircled by a broad, black cravat. The points of his collar seemed to stick in his chin, even though he habitually sat with his head thrown back defiantly.

Deliberately seating himself on a box he rested his hands on his cane and regarded Guy Blackstone fixedly for some minutes without speaking, much to that gentleman's discomfort.

"Well," he said, presently, in a weak treble voice, "ain't you got anything to say? Ain't I worth talking to?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," replied Guy, hurriedly jumping to his feet and placing his chair—the only one in the office—at the old gentleman's disposal. "Excuse me," sir, he said, apologetically. "What can I do for you?"

"Humph! Do for me? A nice question

to ask! Why don't you ask what can I do for you?"

"Certainly, sir," said Guy, bowing, "what can you do for me, sir? I am at your service."

"That's better, much better," replied the old man, approvingly. "Now you're talking sensibly. I can do a good deal for you; yes, sir, a good deal. You are as poor as Job's turkey. I presume?"

Not paying any attention to the flush which overspread Guy's face, he glanced around in disgust.

The office was small, as I said before, and contained in toto: one chair, one desk, one copying press, one bookcase full of law books; a dozen files of papers hung on the ancient, yellow walls, on which the dust of ages had settled as profusely as it carpeted the floor. A small table in a corner was literally covered by piles of legal documents, manuscripts, envelopes, clips, penholders, ink bottles, and a few volumes which had carelessly strayed from the bookcase a few weeks before and had been ingloriously forgotten.

The box on which the old gentleman sat was utilised in the double capacity of a waste paper basket and a shoe-blackening box, the implements of the latter capacity then being crushed under the weight of the sifter.

When he had taken in all this the old gentleman proceeded with his business.

"As I said before, young man, you're as poor as Job's turkey, and I think you would not object to making a few hundred pounds, now would you?"

"I most emphatically would not," answered Guy.

"Then you are my man," said the old gentleman.

"What do you want me to do, sir?" queried Guy.

"That is just the point, my man," said the old gentleman, chuckling audibly. "Yes, my man, that is just the point. But I will explain it to you. I wish to bring a suit against an old enemy of mine. His brother died and left an immense fortune which I think his widow was to have, he—the brother of the deceased—having been left one of the executors of the will. The other executor died, so you see the fortune was left in the other villain's hand—the unmitigated, vile, wretched villain's hands, I mean," continued the old gentleman, hotly. "Well, sir, this heartless wretch so managed to manipulate the fortune that the widow was left without a penny, and I think has probably starved to death by this time—yes, sir, starved to death! Ain't that terrible, my man?"

Guy said he thought it perfectly fearful.

"But she may not have died," said the old gentleman, after a pause; "she may not have starved to death—she may be alive and living in luxury for all I know. She was my niece. But the object, the paramount object, is to regain the fortune by force of the law from this wretched executor and make the restitution to the widow who was defrauded."

"How was it," said Guy, "that a widow was obliged to have an executor to her legal heritage?"

"How? how? Can you ask how?" demanded the old gentleman, excitedly. "Why, because he—her husband—had creditors and all that, and—"

"Oh, I understand," interrupted Guy.

"Pooh, pooh!" said the old gentleman. "You do not. Pooh, pooh, sir! I say you do not. All I want of you is to work this case, and if you succeed I will give you five hundred pounds. D'ye hear? Five hundred!"

With some trouble Guy elicited many minor details of this strange case from his stranger client, then the old gentleman suddenly left him. After he had gone Guy ruefully remembered that he had not asked the name of his client, the names of all interested in the case, nor his address. He had forgotten to do so, his mind had been so excited by the allusion to this summons and compensation for the work he was to perform. Here was a sorry predicament indeed!

Two days passed and his client did not return.

The third day was cold and snowy, and the raw winter wind rattled and shook the windows in his office as if to allow them to remain in the casement was a sin.

Guy waited at his office that night until ten o'clock for the return of his queer old client, but as he did not come the young man donned his threadbare coat, turned the collar up around his ears, and seizing his hat with the conviction that he had been fooled, left the office and wended his way toward his lodgings. His path led him through one of the principal streets brilliantly lighted by the many shop windows, for the Christmas holidays were near and the most exquisitely gorgeous sights imaginable were to be seen. The snow was falling fast too, but the lights and splendour did not care for that, but just glimmered and gleamed away right merrily, and tempted the gaze of every chance wayfarer.

Guy paused a moment to look at the beauties displayed in such profusion in a certain window when a little girl carrying a basket came gliding through the mist of the snowflakes, and approaching the window regarded wistfully a large, handsome doll standing within in all her finery, staring haughtily at the ragged little child.

A look of pity shone in Guy's eyes as he noted the bare feet of the child, blue and pinched with the biting cold. She had an old plaid shawl drawn over her head, and her thin muslin dress was in tatters.

"My little girl," he said, approaching her nearer, "ain't you very cold without your shoes on?"

The child turned in affright as if to run away.

"Come, now," she cried, in a shrill tone, "would yer like to know now? Of course I'm cold. Yer don't 'spects as I kin keep warm widout 'em, eh, do yer?"

"No," he replied; "but have you got a pair of shoes?"

"None of yer business!" she retorted, stepping back a pace.

"Where do you live?" asked Guy.

"You find out!" she retorted. "Yer needn't think yer can come any of them games on me, I tell yer! Mamma and me lives together, we does, but I'm not goin' ter tell yer where, I ain't."

"What is your mamma's name?" he asked.

"Same as mine, I 'spects," replied the child, artfully.

"And what is your first name?" pursued Guy, gently.

"They calls me Hazel, an' some of 'em calls me the brat."

"Will you tell me where you live?" said Guy. "And if your mamma is poor I will help her."

"Oh, no, yer don't!" shrewdly exclaimed the little girl. "I ain't took in so easy, I ain't!"

And ere Guy could question her further she sped away in the storm, and with the resolve to ascertain who the poor child was who so awoke his pity he followed after her.

She did not look back, but sped along rapidly some distance, then turned into a dark, narrow thoroughfare, as forbidding and repulsive to a person of Guy's temperament as could be conceived.

She stopped before a tall tenement presently, then entered and hurried down the dark hall and up the rickety stairs, followed by Guy. On the top floor she entered a door just as he reached the hall, and as it did not close after her he saw a woman sitting by a table sewing by the light of a candle.

Everything in the room denoted extreme poverty and wretchedness, but its inmate appeared to him a woman who had been used to better living. He entered the room softly, and the woman rose and looked at him in surprise.

As she did so, the light of the candle falling more directly on her face revealed to him his lost love, Hazel, and with an exclamation of consternation and compassion he sprang forward, and before the astonished woman could realise what happened he clasped her to his breast.

"Oh, Hazel!" he cried, "has it come to this?"

"Guy Blackstone!" she replied, in amazement, as she recognised him. "Oh, how came you here? Who told you I was in this house?"

He hastily told her how he had followed her little child, and when he finished speaking both sat down and she told her story. Her husband, William Henderson, had led a fast and extravagant life, and after they had been married two years he died, leaving her and her child penniless.

She found how ill fit she was to struggle for her sustenance, but preferred to do so rather than make known her condition to her only living relative, a rich old uncle. Her poor baby grew up neglected to the worst degree, so occupied was her time with the sewing she was forced to do to keep body and soul together as long as possible.

When Guy heard all he renewed his old vows, and telling her he was poor himself, asked for her love. She burst into tears, and declared she had always loved him, though she did not think so when dazzled by her dead husband's wealth. They were married the next day, and little Hazel looked like another child in newer, warmer, and better clothing, and with kid shoes on her poor little feet.

After Guy had been married several days his old client called on him again, and they had a long conversation, during which both seemed much surprised, and at its conclusion they shook hands and parted.

The case was pushed by Guy energetically in court, and was finally won for the old man, who took his niece's fortune, and with it and Guy they proceeded to the young lawyer's cosy little house and there met Hazel.

"Why, Uncle Sam!" she cried, embracing the old gentleman. "What does this mean? How did you find me out?"

"Find you out, Hazel. Why, bless your dear heart!" cried the old gentleman. "I have found you with the aid of your husband, and I have come to bring you your first husband's fortune."

And I am sure it was used to a good purpose.

FACETIÆ.

ANTICIPATORY.

SOCIABLE OLD LADY: "What you says, Mrs. Jenkins, is quite corre'. But with all these 'ere troubles ain't it a comfort to reflec' that both on us is in a goose club again' Christmas? And with any sort o' luck, mum"—(with a chuckle)—"we'll have a bottle of 'Oh, that'll be joyful' 'same time."

IRISH "ILL" LUCK:—A "suspect" obtaining his release through bad health. Moonshine.

SMALL GAME:—Dice. Moonshine.

PARTNERSHIPS DISSOLVED:—Parks and Woods—Does Park think Woods made him snady, or does Park want to open out more? Perhaps Park may consider Woods above him, and himself looked down upon? At any rate, Park is nothing without Woods. Moonshine.

(s) MARTIN TUPPEE'S PHILOSOPHY.

MOTHER: "Marry in haste, you know, my son, and repent at leisure."

SON: "Just so, mother; if I should have to repent, why not take my time over it?" Moonshine.

LITTLE TOMMY: "Papa, what does M.P. mean?"

POND PARENT: "In England it means a Member of Parliament; in Ireland an inhabitant of her 'Majesty's Prison.'" Moonshine.

SEASON TICKETS:—Christmas cards. Moonshine.

THE HORSE SHOW and the Wedding Show have this in common—each is a bridle (bridal) show. Moonshine.

FISHT.

BOLTER rents the two-pair-back in the house of a retailer of fried fish. Bolter never pays, and when threatened with the brokers retaliates by trying to indict his landlord as a nuisance on account of his unsavoury commerce.

"Stop a bit, Mr. Bolter," says the magistrate, "did the fish-shop come to you, or did you go to the fish-shop?"

"The fish-shop was certainly there before I went, your worship."

"Quite so," returned the magistrate, who is nuts on his own pleasant turn of wit, "then I must say you are over a fish-house in more senses than one."

Bolter has been pondering over the business until now, but cannot make head nor tail of it. Judy.

OH, "CHIM-EN-Y!"

THE anti-tobaccoists who have forwarded donations to the Smoke-Abatement Committee, at South Kensington, have made a "grate" mistake.

The old proverb says that there can be no smoke without fire; the Smoke-Abatement Committee is determined to prove, though, that there can be fire without smoke.

One fact is much in favour of the above committee. In its arguments against smoky chimneys it is so exceedingly "flue"-ent.

Special arrangements will be made, we understand, to obviate the dire necessity of the costermonger having to consume his (s)moke.

Smoke, it is admitted, is "sootable" for many purposes; but the wisest plan is virtually the most "fuelish," viz., to burn it as additional fuel. Fun.

VERBAL CURIOSITY.

(By Our Dictionary Dissector.)

WHICH was the sluggard who went to the eliph-ant?

What complaint did the epi-cure?

Was it love that made the porcu-pine?

Who was the chief of the dia-tribe?

What did the para-pet?

Whom did the confede-rate?

Where did the mounte-bank?

Funny Folks.

BARRISTERS' MOTTO.—"Brief" life is here our portion." Funny Folks.

NUMBERS OF 'EM GONE WRONG.

THE towns in India whose names end in abad seem innumerable. How sad to see so many fine places come to "abad" end! Funny Folks.

IT CAME TO HIS EARS.

ALTHOUGH, happily, all fears have been set at rest with regard to the rumoured attempt to blow up the Guildhall, one of our exceptionally funny contributors still maintains that he heard the report. Funny Folks.

GOOD BOXING DAY BLEND.—Champagne at dinner, and real Payne afterwards—at the pantomime. Moonshine.

I HAVEN'T a feather to fly with, as the fowl said when the cook had finished plucking him. Moonshine.

FROM THE WEST END.

WHAT medium of safe conveyance do great tailoring houses employ when sending home the clothes of our pages and footmen?—Parcels de livery. Judy.

LOVE SONGS OF THE SEASON.

(The plummy pudding.)

SWEET, you are rich; I love you—oh, so dearly!

Sweet, you are mine, for better or for worse.

For your dear sake I would (or nearly)

Consent to occupy the sable hearse. Sweetness and light æsthetics may rave to find—

Sweetness and heaviness in you combined! Judy.

A DEAD TAKE-IN.—No payment to the body-snatchers. Judy.

A LITTLE TOO MUCH SAUCE.

THE "Echo," in commenting upon the discovery that horse-flesh is extensively used at the East End in the manufacture of German sausages, says it does not see why the manufacturer should be hindered if he would only honestly call his sausages by the right name. True; but doesn't he go as near as he can when he calls his products his (s)'ossidges?

Funny Folks.

"WHERE 'IGNORE-RENTS' IS BLISS."—Ireland.

Funny Folks.

SOMETHING TOWARDS IT.

THE ladies, generally, have not yet done much toward getting into Parliament, but there is an active agitation just now in favour of seats for shopwomen.

Funny Folks.

TRY IT.

"TIME and TUNE," by John Hullah, is a title that suggests a paradox; for anyone playing, however correctly, from the musical specimens contained in that book, would be playing out of "Time and Tune."

Funny Folks.

MOST LIKELY.

ANOTHER "private gentleman" is advertising that he "wishes to sell his handsome child's perambulator." We conclude that his "handsome child" is too graceful and dignified to be seen to advantage when mewed up in such a vehicle, and so prefers its own "majestic carriage."

Funny Folks.

A BALE-FUL PRACTICE.—The adulteration of American cotton.

Funny Folks.

A SUREB FOR ACTORS.—Clap'em.

Funny Folks.

ADVICE TO ANIMAL PAINTERS.—First sketch your hare.

Funny Folks.

BELLA'S HERO:

A STORY OF

THE WELSH MARCHES.

CHAPTER III.

BELLA AND HER HERO.

YOUNG Conway, as we may well believe, was moved to the uttermost depths of terror and excitement, but not one particle of his mind was taken from him. It was present in all its strength and activity, and his wit was sharpened with the need.

He was distant not more than twenty yards from the river's bank when he discovered the human form upon the flood, and as he leaped towards the stream he unbuttoned and threw off his overcoat, then removed his undercoat, and then sat down and pulled off his boots. Very fortunately, he was sensible enough to wear boots large enough for comfort, so they came off easily. This done he sprang up, and looked to where the girl's clothing was still visible above the surface. She had floated not more than a yard below a direct line across the river from where he stood, and he ventured to make the plunge from that point. He took the bearing carefully, calculated the distance and the force of the current, and then leaped far out with the foaming tide.

He was an expert swimmer, used to athletic exercises of every heartful kind; his muscles inured to hardship, and tuned to endurance, while his nerves were like threads of steel, beyond the reach of passing emotion to jar and weaken them.

The water must have been icy cold, but he did not notice it. He sank slightly below the surface from his plunge, but was quickly up and breasting the current, with his head above water. He saw the girl, now near the middle of the stream, and only a few yards distant—saw that she had ceased her struggling and that her

clothing was becoming rapidly water-logged. It was the wide-spreading skirts which had done so much towards sustaining her, but when they should become thoroughly soaked they would only prove an encumbrance.

But the distance was not great. A few strong, swift strokes, with a fervent cry to Heaven for aid, and our hero laid his hand upon the girl's shoulder and drew her head upward and towards him.

"Bella! Bella! Do you know me? Bella! can you see? Can you breathe?"

By this time he had contrived to get his left arm under her shoulders, bringing her head clear of the water, and then he struck for the shore, making no effort, however, to breast the current, but only to gain the bank in the shortest possible time.

Oh! if she could only help him!

"Bella! Bella! Do you know me?"

Presently he felt a quivering of the weight upon his arm, and in a moment more the lids were lifted and Conway caught the light of the golden brown eyes.

"Bella! Bella! Can you put your arm around my neck? Don't touch my hands, Bella! Put your arm around my neck!"

"Thank God! Oh! thank God!"

So cried the struggling man from the very depths of his soul when he felt the dear arm lifted to his neck—lifted and clinging there for succour and for life.

"George! Oh! save me! You will! Oh! save yourself, George! Don't let me drag you down!"

"Hush! Cling to me, darling! Bella! I will save you! Cling to me! Ah, good! Your dear arm is strong. Hold fast! Hold fast! God is giving us help, darling!"

Fortunate for both of them was it that the girl had strength to raise that good right arm; for our hero could not have made way much longer with such a burden, and only one arm to help himself with. But now he was strong, and he knew he should succeed. Twice he was carried under the surface by the eddying tide, and once a floating log came very near striking him; but the Providence that had seemed to help him from the first did not desert him, and in time—when it seemed to him that he could have endured but little more—when his muscles were relaxing from wear, and his limbs becoming numb—when his prayer to Heaven had become faint and gasping—he put his foot upon solid earth and bore his precious burden up from the cruel flood.

His first movement, upon reaching the upper bank, was entirely involuntary. He sank down upon the damp, sere sward and took breath, and Bella sank down by his side, with her head pillowed upon his shoulder.

A little while so, and the youthful hero shook himself and looked into the face that lay upon his shoulder.

"Bella! Bella! Can you rise up? Can you walk?"

She opened her eyes and seemed to understand what had been said to her, and she tried to smile; but a shudder shook her frame, and a low, painful moan broke from her pallid lips.

Conway was startled. A new terror was upon him. Had he brought her forth from the flood only to have her die now of exhaustion? No, no! He would not have it so. In an instant his strength returned to him and his course was resolved upon. His own home—the cottage of his mother—was not far distant—it was in that part of the village nearest to him, and he would take his precious burden thither. His mother was as good as a doctor.

With quick, decisive movements he gained his two coats, putting the lesser upon his own body, and then, having removed Bella's soaked outer habit, he wrapped his own dry overcoat about her, buttoned it securely, and then lifted her in his arms. He had looked to see if the horse was at hand, but he could not find it.

His strength was good for that work. Holding the helpless form in his arms, close to his bosom, with the head upon his left shoulder, he strode on, regardless of the weight of his

burden and regardless of the cold that cut keenly through his wet, clinging garments.

The cottage of the Widow Conway was one of the prettiest in the village and one of the most comfortable. She sat by her cheerful fire, engaged in knitting—a hale, hearty matron of fifty, retaining all the beauty and much of the freshness of the earlier years. She was one of those whose even, placid tempers make life a blessing, and whose sweetness of disposition gives sweetness of face.

Thus she sat when the front door was noisily opened, and she heard an unusual step in the entry. She hastened to open the door of her sitting-room, and was just in season to meet George with a female form in his arms.

"Oh! mother. It is Bella—Isabel Waldron."

He bore her into the sitting-room and laid her upon the sofa, and then knelt by her side.

"Bella! Bella! You are safe—safe! Bella! can you speak?"

And he shook her gently and smoothed back the golden brown hair from her pure white brow.

He called her name again and again, and by-and-by a cry of joy burst from his lips. She opened her eyes and looked at him.

At first the look was vacant, but anon the golden orbs grew bright, a gleam of intelligence shot forth, and the lips moved, and her tongue formed speech.

"Where—where am I? What is it, George?"

"Yes. Oh! Bella. You are safe. This is my mother's home. Oh! safe—safe!"

And she, in the wondrous surge of emotion that swept through her being, conscious only that she had been near death and was alive, and that he had saved her—he who now knelt at her side and called to her so lovingly—so ardently—so devotedly—with this consciousness upon her she suddenly lifted her head from the sofa pillow and threw both her arms around his neck! She drew him close and laid her head upon his shoulder, crying out like one in ecstasy:

"Oh! my own—my hero! You saved me! I am content. Thank God—thank God!"

There is no knowing how long he would have held her there; but the widow interposed and suggested that the time had arrived when she had better take control, and they both submitted.

George hastened away to his own apartment, where he stripped and thoroughly dried and warmed his skin by friction, after which he donned dry clothing and then went out into the kitchen, where a good fire burned in the great fireplace, and where he found hot water and spirits, and he had just brewed for himself a mug of drink, when he fancied would drive away the chill, when his mother came out to prepare that very same medicine for her patient.

"How is she?" was his first question, as his mother came in sight.

"She is well, George, but I think we had better call the doctor as soon as we can. If you do not feel like going out I will—"

He stopped her where she was.

"I am as strong as ever. Do you attend to the lady and I will call the physician."

Even then the widow would have persuaded her son to remain indoors and let her go forth, but he would not listen.

"No, no," he said, patting her affectionately on the shoulders. "I am not in the least affected by my bath, or if I am it is in a manner far from unpleasant."

"If Sir Peter does not—"

"Hush! Not a word of him. If I am not greatly in error he will have more occasion to look to the welfare of his older daughter. But I must explain at another time. Look to Isabel now, while I run for the physician. But—your judgment is good in such matters. Mamma mine, what do you think of her? Will she suffer from this?"

"She must suffer to some extent, my son. It could not be otherwise. Think of the shock to the system. You know the condition in which you found her—nigh unto death!"

"True, true. It was a terrible shock, and I only wonder that she has revived as she has. There—now I am off. Tell her for what I am gone."

The widow while this conversation had been going on had been busily engaged in making up a drink of hot Jamaica spirit and sugar, with such aromatic spicing as she thought would be pleasant to the palate and at the same time to the stomach, and when George was ready to set forth upon his errand his mother was ready to return to her patient.

The village of Mendon was composed of one broad street, and the dwellings and shops and stores situated thereon extended from the great gates of the outer park of the castle to the old Gothic church, a distance of very nearly a mile. But the one street was not all, though there were no other ways that could be called streets.

There were, however, a dozen or so of narrow courts or "places" extending at right angles from the great street on which were situated cottages and shops, and the doctor himself lived upon one of these courts in a large mansion-like house, with a pretty garden before it, and a well-kept court around it, and with grand old trees throwing their great arms over its eaves, affording pleasant shade in summer time when their branches were clad in verdure.

Conway found the doctor at home—Dr. Tobias Tobey, a small, keen-eyed, well-kept, genial old man of three-score, who had physicked the inhabitants of Mendon almost forty years, looking as young now as he had looked on the day that he laid his father away in the old churchyard and took to his mystic saddle-bags and his well-known gig. At least so said the good mothers who had faith in him.

Conway found him at home and sent him at once to his mother's house to look to the daughter of Sir Peter Waldron, who had met with an accident.

Was it the Lady Catherine?

No, it was Isabel.

"Oho! my pet! my own little Bright Eyes! Bless her dear self! I'll be there in a trice."

So George Conway was not the only man who thought highly and tenderly of Bella Waldron. Ah, no! And for that matter the man did not live in either of the two boroughs who knew her and did not admire.

Naturally the doctor was eager to hear all the particulars of the lady's accident, but Conway would not stop to tell him.

"I can only tell you," he said, "that she fell into the river and was pulled out, and that she is in need of your attention immediately. She will tell you the story, no doubt."

And while the doctor posted off to the widow's cottage George went forth to learn what had become of Bella's horse, and he had the good fortune to meet a boy who had met the animal dripping wet, with a lady's saddle hanging beneath his body, and he—the boy—had taken the horse into his father's barn, and had there cared for him, and was now seeking to discover whence he had come and what had happened to the occupant of the misplaced saddle.

George gave him such information as satisfied his curiosity, and then, killing two birds with one stone, he engaged that the boy should return the horse to Waldron Hall, and that he should convey to Sir Peter the intelligence that his daughter had met with a slight accident which might detain her away from home for a short time; he was going to put it off until the following morning, but upon second thoughts he concluded to send a more explicit word, so he directed the boy that when he was ready to set forth he should come round by the way of Mrs. Conway's cottage, and there get his final instructions.

This done, George hastened home, where he found the doctor and his mother in close conference by the bedside of their patient; for the widow had conveyed Bella to her little spare sleeping-room, on the first floor, where she could be well accommodated, and where she would be within ready call for her nurse.

While George waited in the sitting-room the boy arrived with the horse; and as he was

anxious to send word to Sir Peter as quickly as possible, he managed to call the doctor out and ask him what should be the nature of the message.

"Who's to carry it?" was the little man's first query.

George told him.

"It won't answer, Master Conway. The boy will frighten Sir Peter out of his wits. Aha! if the baronet had my balance of mind! But he hasn't and we can't give it to him. My dear sir, you must write. Sit right down and write to Sir Peter thus: Say to him that his daughter is safe. She is safe—in my hands! But she cannot be moved under eight-and-forty hours—not one moment sooner than that—not a moment. Write so much, and let them find out the rest."

"One word, doctor," said Conway, laying his hand upon Tobey's arm as he was turning away. "Is there any possible danger to the lady from this accident?"

"Not if she has proper care, sir. If your mother will give herself to her as nurse and counsellor, she will come out all right."

"Thank you!"

That was all he answered to the doctor; but to himself and to his fortunate stars he poured forth his innermost feelings, and they were of joy and gladness, even in the presence of calamity. Yes; if Bella Waldron were to be held a prisoner beneath the same roof with himself for two days and two nights, at the least, and if no danger were to befall, he could be happy and thank his stars, which he did.

He wrote the note to Sir Peter Waldron, simply informing him that Miss Isabel's horse had, by some means, tumbled her off into the water; that she was comfortably lodged at the house of the Widow Conway, where Dr. Tobey emphatically pronounced she must remain at least eight-and-forty hours.

George had just come in from despatching the boy upon his mission as the doctor came out from the little bedroom ready to return home.

"Well, doctor, now that you have critically examined the patient, will you tell me just what you think of the case?"

The little, sleek-haired, bald-browed man of medicine, his sharp eyes twinkling through a new pair of gold-bowed spectacles, touched the youth significantly upon the arm as he replied:

"My dear boy, it is a marvel, a perfect marvel. We have here a case in which a life is saved by a mere glance of the eye. Yes, sir, by a mere glance of the eye. Can you imagine how?"

"Indeed I cannot."

"Then listen, and I will tell you: That girl, sir, had given up all hope, had made her last desperate effort, had drawn what she firmly believed to be her expiring breath, and was about to shut out the dreadful scene of flood and horror by closing her eyes, when they fell upon yourself! She knew you on the instant. She said to herself, 'He will save me!' Then she made the effort that upheld her for yet another moment. But, take care, my boy! Don't, for mercy's sake, let that poor girl go falling in love with you, George Conway! Don't you do it!"

"May I ask, why not?" returned the youth, with modest grace and sincerity.

"Why not?" echoed the doctor, like one who could hardly credit the evidence of his own senses. "Do you ask me that? Do you ask it honestly?"

"Indeed, sir, I do."

"Well, upon my word! Why not? Goodness mercy! don't you know Sir Peter Waldron? Don't you know that it has been the one darling aim of his life to wed this girl with him that will be Marquis of Mendon? And do you think he would suffer her to marry with the son of one of the marquis's tenants? Pahaw! I cannot think that you would entertain such a fancy for a moment. You don't know the man, sir, if you do entertain it. Why, old Peter Waldron is the proudest man in the kingdom. I know him well."

"All right," laughed George, playfully patting the little doctor upon the shoulder. "I will take care of myself, and I will take care of Miss Isabel—"

"LADY! Lady Isabel, sir."

"Since when have the daughters of simple baronets been entitled to that distinction? if I may ask."

"You are aware, sir," replied the doctor, with great self-importance, "that even the wives of English knights take the title of LADY only by courtesy?"

"I was aware of it, sir."

"Then, sir, may we not give the distinction to the chief female member of a knight's family? Ay, sir, since the death of her mother we have all called Bella LADY."

"But, sir, her sister Kate is the elder. I should suppose the title would be hers."

"We give it to both of them."

"I stand corrected, sir, and I thank you, too. And now will you tell me, as nearly as you can, what is Lady Bella's physical condition?"

"In a word, sir," answered the doctor, candidly—for he was in a hurry—"she has to fear only a fever. Were she to be moved at present fever would result inevitably; but, sir, if she remains here and your mother gives her her best care I look to see her come up from it without being at all worse in any way than she is at this moment. I will call to-morrow morning. I must go now and see the marquis. Poor man! He is failing."

Conway sprang forward and caught the doctor by the arm and started to speak.

He seemed to have another question to ask. But he did not ask it. He only craved pardon for his abruptness, and then suffered the man of medicine and healing to depart.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT NEXT?

It had been late in the afternoon when the boy set forth for Waldron Fells upon his mission to the baronet; and an hour and a half later Sir Peter appeared at the Widow Conway's dwelling. He was a peculiar-looking man, wholly unlike any other man in that region, both physically and mentally.

Mentally he was a curious compound—a compound of shrewdness and simple-mindedness—self-will and love of flattery—of stern honour united with an inborn disposition to care first and foremost for Number One. Such a man, though seeming of iron and firm in his integrity, might meet the designing Mephistopheles who would seduce him.

Physically Sir Peter was an under-sized man; his frame rather loosely jointed, with bones large, the shoulders rounded and stooping, the upper body of normal length, while the legs, not only exceedingly short for such a body, were bent outward like a bow.

As he stood or as he walked, with his knees together, his feet would be apart almost half a yard. During Peter's boyhood Doctor Tobey, father of our Tobias, had exercised all his skill and ingenuity towards getting those terrible legs into proper shape, but without avail. They had been so made, and there was an end of it.

Sir Peter's face was strongly marked. The head was large; the hair, thick and crisp, was of iron grey, the brows heavy and shaggy, eyes deeply set, and of a steely grey colour; while the lower features—nose, mouth, chin, and jaws—were those of a man who loved the good things of life, who could be self-willed and angular, lacking refinement, and loving himself with a love that could not fail.

We may remark here that the mother of his children had become his wife to please her father. She had been a beautiful woman—a woman pure, gentle, loving, and kind, and seeming better fitted for the rest of the Beyond than for the place of mate to such a man as Sir Peter Waldron.

He entered the small sitting-room of the widow's cottage like a walking tornado.

Where was his daughter? What was it all about? What had happened? And he was going on in that fashion when George interposed. It was not his usual style, but he had suffered himself to become fretted and uneasy during his ride, and it had so happened that on his arrival at the end of his journey his tender sentiments had been all expended, and he was ready for the fractious, which he was pouring forth, as we have heard, when young Conway laid a hand very gently upon his arm.

"Sir Peter, Sir Peter! you forget yourself. You may disturb your child when she most needs rest."

"Ah! Eh! Who—Eh! George Conway. Ay, I was a little strong in my expression. But, boy, I am anxious. Where is Bella? What has happened? Where is she?"

At this point Mrs. Conway came out from the little room and laid her finger on her lips.

"Hush! Sir Peter, your daughter is awake and knows you are here. She will see you at once. But, sir, I beg of you—do not disturb her more than may be absolutely unavoidable."

"Whose—whose child is she?" demanded the baronet, hotly.

He was angry with himself because he had come into the cottage in such a foolish temper, and he was ready to vent his ill-feeling upon whatever came in his way. But he was to be very quickly quieted.

The widow saw, what she might have seen with half an eye, that George was swelling with indignation and ready to burst, and she resolved to step in before him. She advanced to the baronet's front and gently laid a finger upon his arm.

"Dear Sir Peter, I hope she may remain your child for many years to come, and if you would lend your help to that end in this hour you will moderate your speech and suffer the dear one to remain in quiet and repose."

The effect of this upon the storming man was marvellous. It was like oil poured upon the troubled waters. The widow saw quickly that he was subdued, and without giving him time to flounder and stammer in his shame, she at once led him to the little room where Bella was lying, simply saying to him as he crossed the threshold:

"She is very weak, sir. You will be gentle." He nodded yieldingly and passed into the room.

The baronet remained fifteen minutes with his child and then came out, closing the door of the bedroom behind him. He was calm and composed and his mood seemed gentle and confiding. His first speech was to Mrs. Conway: Would she not like to have him send over a good nurse to help take care of the patient?

"I suppose Lily will come over?" said the widow.

Lily Butler was Bella's maid—her maid and her friend, and sometimes playmate.

"Certainly. She is on her way now. She was about ready to start when I came away."

Mrs. Conway assured him that she should want nothing of help beyond that, and she succeeded in making him believe her.

He stood for a little time in a quandary, feeling that he ought to offer the woman some remuneration for her trouble, and yet at a loss how to approach the subject delicately. She saw his trouble and again came to his assistance.

"Rest perfectly easy, Sir Peter. Your child shall be cared for as though she were my own. And, with a playful smile, "if I should feel that any expense is legitimately incurred, I will present my account when the doctor presents his."

Good! This pleased the old man, and he rubbed his hands gleefully; and it helped him, too, in his effort with the son, for he felt that he owed unbounded gratitude to the preserver of his dear Bella, his darling and his pet, his beauty and his pride.

George met him as he turned and anticipated him.

"Give me joy, Sir Peter. You are happy, I

know, but you cannot be happier than I am. If you have a dear child given back to your arms from the grasp of the flood I have the heartfelt satisfaction of knowing that I was the humble instrument. At some time, sir, when we both have leisure, I will tell you the story, but I will not detain you now. You may command me, however, at any time. Remember that you have my respect and esteem, and if I can serve you ever hesitate not to make the demand."

The baronet bowed politely, accepted the voluntary offer, and then turned away in far better humour than that which had marked his entrance.

Sir Peter had not been gone a great while when a carriage arrived, bringing Lily Butler. She was a bright-eyed, brown-haired, laughter-loving, pretty girl of eighteen or nineteen, brought up in the baronet's family, and though she served Bella in the capacity of maid, her real position was more like that of a loved and loving sister.

Mrs. Conway was careful that the maid should thoroughly warm herself, that her garments should be warm and dry, before she went into the little bedroom; but the work was quickly accomplished, and when Bella found the arms of her dear Lily around her neck and felt the sisterly kisses upon her cheek the current of life leaped anew and the touch of sickness was put farther away.

As the shades of evening fell, the simple supper disposed of and the table cleared, George Conway sat at his reading-desk with a lighted lamp at his elbow and a book in his hand, but he was not reading—he was thinking of the patient by whose side his mother was at that moment sitting.

We have heard Colonel Fitz Eustace speak of Bella Waldron in connection with this same youth, and it may be well to know at this point what ground he had for the hint he was pleased to throw out. He had seen the two young people in friendly conversation, and their meeting came about in this way:

George had reached home from India in December, two months previous to the time of which we write, and on New Year's Day, which came on Sunday, Bella Waldron had called upon him.

She had come to see Mrs. Conway, the sister of her dearly-loved foster-mother—ostensibly that was her object, but really she had come to inquire after Arthur Graham—the young Lord Allerton, in whom she felt interested.

She remembered Arthur as her playmate, as the stout, laughing, noble-hearted boy who had given up his playthings to her and made her happy. To be sure she had been very young at the time, only six to seven years of age, but the events were fixed in her remembrance with a vividness that would not even let them grow dim.

And now was that only the ostensible object of Bella's seeking George Conway? Had she, moved thereto by a grand and noble spirit of generous independence, sought him for the purpose of making him her friend?

She had heard much of him in letters from a daughter of General Lancaster, and thus knew him to be brave, and loyal, and true, and generous, as well as modest and tender-hearted. Would it be a wonder that a true-hearted, frank and loving girl should determine to seek the friendship of such a youth?

Had the youth been of her own rank in life the case would have been different. She could not then have sought him without laying herself open to the imputation of forwardness and boldness.

However, let the motive have been what it might, the meetings of the two had been very few, not more than four in all, two of which had been made by Bella, while the other two had been made by George, he calling at Waldron Hall.

George sat by his desk with his book upon his knee and his head upon his hand, when to his side came his mother and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"George, the young lady wished to have the clothing of her bed aired, and she was feeling so

remarkably well, so entirely free from all pain, so strong, and so buoyant, that she insisted on getting up and having her dressing-robe put on—a robe which Lily brought with her. And now, my son, she will have it that she can come out here. What can I do?"

"My dear mother!" cried the youth, dropping his book and starting upright, "why do you come to me? What can I say or do? How can I advise you?"

"George, she wished to see you!"

"What?"

"It is true. I know it, my son."

"Beware, my darling mother. Don't let your love for your boy lead you into wild speculation."

"I tell you, George, there is no such thing as speculation. I know what I know. Bella is eager to see and converse with you. Ah! here is Lily. Ask her."

"Do you ask her?"

"Lily, tell my boy what your mistress really and truly wants."

The bright-faced girl looked out from her great blue eyes, honestly and sincerely, and answered as though she were telling something which ought to surprise nobody:

"Why, she thinks she should enjoy it if she could converse with Master George."

"But," asked the youth, "is she able to come out into this room?"

"Her present condition is a surprise to herself," said the maid. Since drinking a cup of tea and eating the broth she feels like her old self, as though nothing wonderful had happened. I do not think it could harm her at all to come out here and sit as long as she wishes."

"Then let her come, by all means."

And ere long thereafter Bella Waldron, clad in a warm, fur-trimmed, crimson silk dressing-robe, made her appearance, walking by Lily's side, but without a grain of Lily's support.

She was certainly a beautiful girl. By the side of Lily she looked taller than she really was. She was of good height, however, fully up to the average standard, and possessed of a form that was perfection in every part. Classed among the flowers she would have represented the full blush rose—plump, healthful, and vigorous.

When she smiled her face was dimpled, and the picture which that face afforded was one of the most charming that could be conceived. Her hair was of a warm, golden brown hue, curling bewitchingly where it could gain freedom so to do, while the eyes, full and lustrous, gleaming with a light that might win an anchorite from his misanthropy, were of a colour to match the hair.

They, too, were of a golden brown hue, and when beaming in the full radiance of their rich, warm lovelight their power to charm was magical.

Not everybody saw those eyes at their brightest, for they only beamed in their glorious effulgence when she was glad and happy. But be sure they lighted up when George Conway approached her, and the glad light shone over the whole face, making it a picture of sunshine and joy.

And by-and-bye the widow had work demanding her attention in the kitchen, and Lily concluded to go and help her, at all events to keep her company.

"Mrs. Conway," the outspoken girl said, when they had reached the rear apartment of the cottage, and two doors had been closed behind them, "are they not beautiful?"

The woman looked up, as though not quite sure that she understood.

"I spoke of George and Bella. Are they not beautiful? Where, where, in all the country round can you find another pair so handsome to look upon?"

"You are right, Lily, though perhaps I am not the one who ought to say so."

"And why not, indeed? Oh! if I had such a son, I should never tire of singing his praise. But—what is to come of it? Do you not tremble when you think of it? I can tell you—I do not betray any confidence in doing it—I can tell you, what, no doubt, you already



[“WHOSE CHILD IS SHE?” DEMANDED THE BARONET, HOTLY.]

know, that Bella loves your son with all her heart!”

“Yes,” nodded the widow, dreamily. “I have seen it.”

“And what is to come of it? What will Sir Peter say when he knows it?”

“That remains to be seen, Lily. I have spoken plainly with George—”

“Oh! then he does love her? He does! He does!”

“Of course he does. How could it be otherwise? He loves her devotedly—with all his heart.”

“Oh! I am so glad! And yet,” with a melancholy sigh and a shake of the head, “what can come of it?”

The widow did not answer, and presently Lily put the question more direct:

“What does George think? Does he think that he can bend the will of the proud baronet?”

“He thinks, I believe, that he may find opportunity to serve Sir Peter in a signal manner. At first I was troubled, but I am not troubled now. They have not yet spoken of love, one with the other, and there is no knowing when they will do so. Until they do that we will not look beyond.”

Lily Butler winked her bright eyes and shook her golden head in a mysterious manner, plainly intimating that in her mind the looking beyond might not be out of place even now.

Meantime, the pair of whom the widow and the maid had been conversing were alone together. Bella had spoken with her hero when she first entered, as he had come forward at his mother's side and placed the great easy-chair in a favourable position for her comfort and convenience to the light; and then he had withdrawn to his own desk again.

But when his mother had excused herself, and left the room, and Lily Butler had followed suit, then he could do no less than move his seat nearer to the fire and keep the guest company. And he had a particular reason for doing so, a reason which was to him urgent. He had not yet heard the story of her fall into the river. He

had not the least idea how the accident had happened, and now as he brought his chair nearer to her side he asked her if she would tell him how she had come to the sad plight in which he had found her.

“You cannot imagine,” he said, “how anxious I have been to know how your horse came to find the river, for surely you could not have attempted to ford a stream.”

“No, no,” she said, with a smile, “I had not become quite so reckless as that. No; the accident was, in its origin, very simple, a horse without fear. I had started out simply for exercise. I heard the head groom last evening complaining that our saddle-horses were not exercised enough to keep them in health, and he spoke of Emperor particularly. He said his limbs were swollen from standing so long in his stall. I said nothing at the time, but this forenoon I went to Michael and told him to have Emperor groomed and ready to saddle, for my use, within an hour after noon.”

“At first he flatly refused me. He said the horse was not fit for a lady to ride. He said a good strong man used to the rein and spur should give him at least a ten-mile drive before I would be safe in taking him. But that did not suit me. I told Michael that I could drive as well as his best man, and that if he would put on a proper curb and snaffle I could hold any horse he had.”

“He was very loth to let me have the horse, but I think I must have finally fretted him into it. I probably hurt his feelings by affecting to laugh at his fears; or I should say by laughing at his fears, which I did outright, and affecting to doubt his word, so that in the end he let me have the animal in spite. He thought to punish me, or to let me punish myself. And he did it.”

“Well; at one o'clock the horse was ready for me, and one of the boys told me before I mounted that Michael had been exercising the animal for an hour or more. It may have been that that very exercise did the mischief. The horse came to the stepping-stone tired so that he

started off tamely enough, and I flattered myself that all was safe, and I even laughed at the thought of the foolish bother the old groom had taken to quiet a well-behaved animal.

“When I set forth my only thought was of exercise, but when I found the air so cool and bracing and my horse growing better and better, as I thought, I resolved to keep on to Mendonbury, and perhaps to call on my old foster-mother. And I thought I might find time to look in upon good Aunt Mabel.”

(The “Aunt Mabel” thus spoken of was Mabel Conway, the mother of George.)

“Three miles were covered and all went well. Then, however, Emperor began to increase his speed, and I could not hold him in. Half a mile in this manner, and then he took the bit between his teeth, and with all my strength I could not get it away from him. He had struck upon the outside road, the mountain path, of his own accord, and when he had taken it and saw the straight way before him he plunged on madly. When I found that I could not get the bit away from him I looked to see where we would bring up. The old fording-place of the river—and the river nearly full to its upper banks!

“Here, I thought, was an opportunity to give Emperor a lesson. The river would stop him if the rein could not. And with this thought I laid my whip upon his flank and cried out for him to go! I had become excited; the thought of fear was not with me. I put on the whip and cried out more loudly. The river was close at hand. I braced myself so that a sudden stop or a swerving from the direct course should not unseat me. I braced myself and clung to saddle-bow and mane. On! on! on! And still on!

“When I found that the horse was going into the water—when I knew that he would leap into the mad torrent—I shut my eyes and prayed to God! I remember that I called upon the Heavenly Father, and that was the last—the last—until—Oh! How weak! How weak! The next—”

(To be Continued.)



[“WHAT A LIKENESS! WHO CAN YOU BE?” CRIED COLONEL EGERTON.]

MY DOUBLE; OR, A STRANGE LIKENESS. A NOVELETTE. (COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

“INDEED! I shall marry whom I choose!” cried an impatient voice not five yards from me, as I sat on the beach at St. Aft’s, hidden by a sheltering projection in the cliff from the passers by.

Something in the tone of the speaker’s voice interested me, and I looked up from my sketching to see who it was who had spoken, but the rocks hid them from my sight and I continued my work without satisfying my curiosity.

“What curious things one hears,” I thought, as I painted away vigorously. “What tragedies and romances are being enacted around one, and what sorrows and sufferings there are in the world, even those at hand, of which one remains ignorant. I wonder who it is they are forcing that poor girl to marry?” for I had little doubt that speech I had overheard was made by some young girl whose hard-hearted and worldly relations were striving to induce her to marry—for money most likely—someone she could not love.

I soon forgot my fancies and the speaker in my work. I was leaving St. Aft’s next day and I had only a few hours left to finish the sketch I had in hand.

It was a glorious summer day and the sea was of a deep blue and as smooth as glass. The little waves broke in tiny ripples on the yellow sand and murmured sleepily at the foot of the great cliffs.

One could hardly imagine, to look at them now, how St. Aft’s could have won its reputa-

tion of being one of the most dangerous bays in S—shire, nor believe how many a brave ship had been dashed to pieces on the rocks that reared their heads so majestically from the calm waters that scarcely moved around them.

We had been passing six weeks at St. Aft’s. My father was rector of a neighbouring parish some twenty miles inland, and had exchanged duties for that time with the vicar of St. Aft’s, and a pleasant time we had had of it.

I had filled my book with sketches, and Mildred her cabinet with fossils, whilst my father’s health had improved greatly in the fresh sea air.

I was sorry our holiday had come to an end, but even the most delightful things must end, I thought, and strove to console myself with thinking how glad our own people would be to see us again.

That evening I found there were many little things yet to be done before we should be ready for our start on the morrow, and at nine o’clock I put on my hat to run down to the town to give some last order to the carrier who was to call for our luggage next morning.

“Are you going out alone so late, Frances?” said Mildred, doubtfully. “Can’t you send Ann?”

“No,” I replied, decidedly—I was the eldest, and had charge of the house—“Ann cannot be spared. I shall not be long, Milly, and it is hardly really dark yet.”

So saying I shut the door behind me and ran down the steps, through the garden, and out on to the road.

My message was soon given, and I turned to retrace my steps, walking slowly up the hill, for I had run down so quickly that I was quite out of breath, and stopping now and then to look at the sea that lay placid and motionless in the moonlight.

As I stood watching a little white-sailed barque travelling slowly across the line of light the moonbeams had traced on the waters I was startled by a voice beside me.

“Frances,” it said, “what luck! How did

you manage to get here? I have been watching and hoping this hour past, and was just going away in despair, when I saw you coming up the hill, darling.”

“Who are you? What do you mean?” I cried, drawing back. “You are mistaken!”

He laughed. He was a middle-sized man, young and good-looking, though a cloud having come over the moon at this time I could not discern his features very clearly.

“Why, Frances! what do you mean, you little goose? Don’t waste time in pretending not to know me, but let us talk whilst we can. How do our prospects look, dearest?”

“Sir,” I cried, moving away, “this is intolerable. Who is it you take me for?—for I tell you you are making a great mistake.”

“Nonsense! Don’t be ridiculous, there’s a good girl,” he replied, coolly walking along by my side, “and don’t let us go too near your house or we may be seen by your father or—”

“Will you be so good as to leave me?” I cried, in an agony of fear, believing that I had met with some madman.

“Leave you, Frances! Why, what has happened to you? Don’t tease me, darling! This morning you were longing, like me, for a few moments’ private talk. Take my arm and tell me all your plans and don’t be fooling when we have only a few minutes to ourselves.”

He attempted to take my hand and draw it under his arm; I pulled it roughly away, exclaiming, angrily:

“Sir, it is ungentlemanly of you to annoy an unprotected girl in this way.”

“Frances!” he cried, starting back, “this is too much!”

“It is too much indeed. How you have learnt my name I don’t know, for I have, as far as I know, never seen you before, but—”

“Never seen me before! Are you crazy? Come, don’t be ridiculous!” he returned, laying his hand on my arm.

I wrenched myself free and turned angrily away down a side road, running against a tall, military-looking personage as I did so.

At the sight of him my companion uttered a suppressed exclamation—an oath, I thought—and turned abruptly away, walking swiftly down the other road.

I would have passed on, thankful to be delivered from him, but to my amazement the gentleman whom I had run against stopped me. "What are you out at this time of the evening for alone?" he said, gravely; "but I fear I need not ask—I saw."

"Indeed!" I replied. "I only went out on a message; not that—excuse me for saying so—it can be any business of yours."

"No business of mine! But I think it is, Frances," he answered.

Frances! Was I going mad? Who were these men who knew my name so well, and seemed to think themselves so deeply concerned in my affairs and yet whom I had never seen in my life before?

"Let me pass," I cried, coldly, trying not to show how frightened I was.

"Nay, I will see you home, at any rate," he replied, following me.

"I am quite able to take care of myself," I replied.

"I doubt it, or I should not have found you in that fellow's company," he answered, dryly.

"It was an accident. But I don't see why it is worse for me to be in his company than yours. I don't desire either."

"I can hardly believe that," he said, in the same tone.

"Can't you?" I replied, getting angry; "but you know nothing about me."

"I sometimes wish I didn't, Frances," he replied, bitterly.

"You are as much a stranger to me as he is, and why you—"

"A stranger!" he cried, contemptuously.

"Yes—a stranger. I never saw him in my life before, and I—"

"Pshaw!" he replied, sternly. "I thought better of you, Frances. I did not think you would stoop to tell a fib. I saw the fellow plainly enough, and I wish for your own sake and the sake of your family he was a stranger."

"Do you know whom you are speaking to?" I said, in bewildered anger, stopping suddenly and confronting him.

"Rather?" he answered. "Why do you ask me such a foolish question?"

"Because it seems to me that either I or you and the man who has just left me are mad. I do not know either of you."

He started back.

"Frances?" he exclaimed, in utter astonishment.

"What! have you really made a mistake?" I cried, tearing off the veil that partly concealed my face and confronting him.

An utter change came over his manner. He stepped back in bewildered astonishment, and raised his hat apologetically.

"I have indeed been mistaken," he said, in a changed tone. "How can I ever apologise sufficiently? But," and he looked at me again, curiously, "I—I never was so deceived in my life. I could have sworn—"

"And the other man was deceived too, I suppose," I answered, rather sarcastically, for I was very angry and frightened.

"Doubtless. We both mistook you for the same person. Again I must beg you to excuse me."

And he walked rapidly along beside me, for I had started off towards home as fast as my legs would carry me.

"You have given me a great fright," I answered, half sobbing.

"Believe me, I am truly penitent. I—I mistook you for my own cousin, whose name, it seems, is the same as yours," he answered.

"Well, don't mind—I excuse you," I replied, hurriedly, my tears beginning to flow, "but please leave me now you are certain I am not your cousin."

"May I not see you home? It is late," he said, kindly.

"No, thank you. I prefer to be alone," I answered.

He stopped, hesitated, and, raising his hat,

turned away, again begging me to excuse his mistake—to allow him to call on me next day and explain matters.

"No, no; it doesn't matter, and I'm going away," I replied, running down the road that led to the vicarage, and only too glad to get rid of him for good.

What an absurd mistake it had been, I thought, as I locked the garden gate behind me. Should I tell papa and Milly? No; I would not, or they would always have it as a joke against me; and wiping my eyes and beginning to feel very brave now that I was safe at home, I entered the house, trying to look quite as if nothing had happened.

"How long have you been, Frances," said Milly. "It's ten o'clock. I am so tired. Let us go to bed. You look tired, too, and your eyes are red. Have you been weeping over our departure from St. Aft's?"

"Nonsense. Come along to bed, if you are so tired," I replied. "I told Jackson to call for the things."

"All right. Good night then," she answered.

And we went to bed.

My adventure, however, hindered my sleeping. I could not get it out of my head. I wonder who this Frances whose figure must so resemble mine might be, and who were the two gentlemen who had so strangely accosted me, and in what relation did they stand to her? I could not forget the looks of the last, and the tones of his voice still rang in my ears.

"Well, I'm never likely to know what it all means, nor to see him again," I murmured, as I at last sank to sleep; "but if I were Frances—"

Here slumber put an end to my cogitations.

Summer and autumn passed away and winter came. Our visit to St. Aft's was often looked back to by all of us with pleasure and a longing for the warm summer sun to which for so long we had said adieu.

And I never thought of St. Aft's without wondering where Frances, my double, might now be.

Winter came on us with a sudden fall of snow that lay on the ground for several weeks, and I, who never could stand much cold, fell ill in consequence, and for three long months was confined to my room. When the thaw set in I grew worse, and the doctor looked grave and began to suggest that as soon as I could be moved I should try change of air and go to a warmer climate.

But how could this be managed? Papa could not get away. I had no friends abroad to whom I could go, and Mildred could not travel with me, for we could never leave papa alone at the rectory.

Out of this dilemma we were rescued by a lady—a friend of ours—who had travelled much abroad, and who told us of a delightful boarding-house of a very select character at St. Remo, where I could remain for two or three months and be sure of good nursing and care if I were ill.

The long journey was the only difficulty. If I went I should have to travel alone.

My mind, however, was set on going. I had been a prisoner so long in my back room that the idea of leaving it and finding myself in the sunny South and able to move about and get out without fear of the cold north-east wind and chillingsnow was very fascinating to me. I had no fears myself on account of the journey, and was quite ready to undertake it alone.

Milly and papa at first hesitated, but I was determined, and at last they gave a reluctant consent and it was settled that as soon as I was a little stronger and the weather was sufficiently settled I should set out on my journey.

It was a sunny March morning that I left home and started for London under the care of a friend with whom I was to pass a night in town, and who had promised to see me off next morning on my way to B—, not very far from Folkestone, where I was again to break my journey, staying for a day or two at the house of an old parishioner of my father's.

I was glad to have begun my journey at last,

and, wrapped up in cloaks and furs, got through its first stage even more comfortably than I had anticipated.

Next morning, however, unexpected and important business prevented my friend from accompanying me to the station, and I had to go alone.

I was quite equal to managing for myself, however; I took care to be in good time, saw my boxes labelled, and took my seat comfortably in a first-class carriage quite ten minutes before the train was to start. It was not a crowded train, and I hoped I might have the carriage to myself for at least the first part of my journey.

Till the clock was on the stroke of the hour for our departure I believed my hopes would be realised, but at the moment the whistle sounded the door of the carriage was flung open and in jumped a young lady, breathless and panting, having arrived but just in time to take her seat. In another instant we were off.

"Well, as it's a lady I don't much care, I thought, as I watched the new-comer seating herself in the opposite corner of the carriage. What a run she seems to have had for the train," and I observed my travelling companion narrowly.

She was tall and slight, about my own height, I fancied, and dressed in a black cashmere dress, long sealskin paletot, with a velvet bonnet and a veil, which she kept drawn down over her face, and which prevented my distinguishing her features.

She threw herself back in her seat with a long sigh of relief as it seemed to me. When we were well outside the station I noticed how her hand trembled as she loosened the collar of her jacket and untied the strings of her bonnet. She seemed, I thought, quite upset by the hurry of catching the train. Was she going to make the whole journey with me, or was she only going a part of the way?

In silence we sat as the train moved swiftly on, passing the first and second stations on the road without stopping. When, however, we neared the third it began to slacken its speed.

"Does this train always stop here?" she inquired, in an agitated voice, looking across the carriage at me.

I referred to my Bradshaw and answered, to her evident relief, in the affirmative, but for all that she seemed still anxious and pulled the curtain across the window, and turned her back almost to it until the train started again.

After we had proceeded on our way for a few minutes she spoke again.

"How often does this train stop between here and Folkestone?" she asked.

Again I looked at my Bradshaw.

"It stops at B—, I know," I replied, turning over the leaves, "for I am going there—and—yes, it stops at two other stations, Y—and L—."

"And how long does it take to get from L—to B—?" she asked.

"Half an hour," I replied, "and then half an hour on to Folkestone. Are you going there?"

"No—yes—I believe so," she answered, confusedly.

I looked at her again rather curiously, and wondered that she should have hesitated in her reply, and then till Y— was reached we sat on in silence.

After leaving Y— she raised her veil for the first time, and I saw she was quite a young girl, not more than eighteen or nineteen. I thought, with fair hair and blue eyes, much the same colour as mine, a pretty face that reminded me a little of Mildred's, and very white, pearly teeth.

"Very young to be travelling alone," I thought, as I remembered how my father had objected to me, who had reached my twenty-sixth year, undertaking my journey without a companion. "I wonder if she is going abroad, or if she is expecting to meet anyone at Folkestone."

"Are you crossing to-night?" I said, at length.

She started.

"No—yes—it depends," she answered.

"I am going across to-morrow. I suppose you will be joined by friends at Folkestone?" I went on.

"Yes, very likely; I expect to meet some relations there in all probability. At what hour does the boat start?" she answered.

"As soon as this train gets in," I replied, thinking she was rather ill-informed of the particulars of the journey she had undertaken.

"Directly?" she asked, with a look of satisfaction.

"Yes; they only wait for the passengers by this train to arrive and then they start," I replied.

At length we came to L—and she put down her veil, pulled the curtains across the window, and turned her back towards it as before, not raising her veil again till we had left L—some moments behind us.

She then seated herself a little nearer to me on the opposite side of the carriage and kept glancing at me in an excited, nervous manner that disturbed me not a little. She grew restless and fidgety, and sighed deeply every now and then. What ailed her? I wondered.

"We don't stop again till we get to B—now, do we?" she asked.

"No," I replied.

"And that won't be for half an hour, will it?" she continued.

"No, not for half an hour," I answered, feeling rather nervous. I knew not why.

She seated herself opposite me and fixed her blue eyes on my face scrutinisingly. I began to feel very uncomfortable.

"What did you give for that cloak?" she said, at last, abruptly, laying her hand on the velvet cloak I wore.

The question so startled me that without waiting to consider what a strange—nay, impertinent—one it was, I told her.

"Five pounds," she replied. "Mine cost fifteen."

And then she looked hard at my hat and muff.

At length she leant over towards me with a mysterious look on her face, and I felt my heart beginning to beat fast with terror. Was the girl mad? I turned cold all over as the horrid possibility flashed across me.

"I want you to do something for me," she said, in a low voice. "You look kind hearted. I want you to help me."

"Help you! Do you want some money?" I replied, putting my hand into my pocket, for I began to be so frightened that I would have given her all the contents of my purse if she had demanded it.

She laughed, and, to my frightened ears, there was something maniacal in her low, nervous tones.

"I don't want money," she said. "I want your clothes."

"My clothes!" I gasped.

"Yes; your jacket, your hat and muff, your—"

"Good heavens!" I cried, half starting up. "Are you mad, or are you trying to frighten me? I'll call—"

"Sit down," she cried, her blue eyes blazing. "Sit down. I don't want to hurt you, I only want you to help me. I must have your clothes. I'm followed—I'm watched, I must disguise myself—they shall not take me."

Followed! Watched! She was a mad woman then. My fears were not vain. Oh! what should I do? She might murder me before the train reached B—and no one would be the wiser.

Again I attempted to rise to open the window, but her strong hand pulled me back and thrust me into my seat again.

"You need not be afraid of me. I'm harmless," she said, "but I tell you it's a matter of life and death to me. I must and will have your clothes—you shall have mine in exchange, and they are better than yours."

"And I tell you," I cried, indignation getting the better of my fear, "that you shall not have them."

"We shall see," she replied, setting her white teeth firmly and beginning to unhook the collar of my jacket.

When I felt her long, cold fingers at my throat I could endure no more; I gave one cry and fainted.

When I came to myself again I was alone, my mysterious companion had disappeared. I looked round the carriage in utter astonishment. I tottered to the window and looked out, half expecting to see blood on the step, and to find my eccentric companion, who I had now no doubt whatever was insane, had thrown herself out of the carriage, and that I should next day hear that her mutilated corpse had been picked up on the roadway; but no traces of her were to be seen.

I sat down again, feeling still very queer and faint, and presently the train slackened its speed.

"Here we are at B—," I thought, thankfully, preparing to get out and taking my umbrella from the rack above my head, and as I did so we entered the station.

"Folkestone—Folke—stone!" shouted one porter after another.

What did they mean? I rushed to the door and looked out. There was "Folkestone" written up in the largest and reddest of letters just opposite my carriage. I had passed my station in some mysterious manner.

"I see it all now," I thought, as I remembered my fainting fit. "She got out at B—and left me in my faint in the carriage to be taken on to the journey's end, the horrid girl. What am I to do now—and who are all these people?"

For around the door of my carriage had assembled a group of men who looked at me curiously.

One, a man in plain clothes, but followed by two policemen, opened the door of my carriage and looked around as if he expected to see someone else within, and as I endeavoured to get out he laid his hand on my arm, bidding the other men "look out for the gentleman."

"I have orders to detain you, miss," he said, firmly but respectfully; "we cannot allow you to go on."

"Detain me! What do you mean? I've come too far already. I want to go back to B—" I replied, feeling dreadfully frightened again.

"We will see you safe back to London, miss, according to our directions. As for the gentleman—"

"To London? I don't want to go to London, I am on my way to St. Remo. By what authority do you stop me—and who are you?"

"At your father's order," he replied, "as you may doubtless imagine."

"My father! There must be some mistake," I cried.

"Not at all! We had our instructions an hour or more ago from your father, Colonel Egerton."

"Colonel Egerton is not my father. I knew you were making a mistake," I cried, triumphantly. "I am Miss Frances Montgomery. My father is—"

For an instant the man seemed staggered. Then he glanced at a paper he held in his hand and then again at me. His glance seemed to reassure him.

"Everything is fair in love and war, miss, they say," he replied, with a slight smile, "so I suppose we must excuse you, but for all that I must trouble you to come along with me for the present. Any traces of the gentleman?"

And he turned quickly to the policemen who had returned. Their reply was in the negative. He frowned.

"Well, well, we've got the lady, at any rate. We shall nab him soon enough. Call a cab, Jones, we must take the young lady away."

"Take me away! I tell you I can prove I am Miss Montgomery. I have luggage—two portmanteaus in the train. See, here is my ticket for B—. I can easily prove to you who I am."

I put my hand hastily into the breast of my jacket. How unusually soft it felt. But what had become of the pocket? Then I hurriedly

dived into my side pocket and drew from it a purse, opened it, and handed my ticket to the man.

He smiled as he took it, and to my horror I perceived that instead of being a ticket to B—it was in truth one to Folkestone.

"There has been some trickery," I began; but the man burst into a laugh.

"You see it's no use, miss; let me assure you it will be much better for you to come quietly with us and not try to deny your identity any longer," he said. "We are police. I am a detective; you cannot deceive me, miss."

"But see," I cried, in despair, "here is a letter," and I thrust my hand into my pocket again, "from my father. Read it and you will see that I speak the truth."

I put the letter into his hand, trembling with fear.

"Miss Frances Egerton, 4, Cambridge Gardens, Hyde Park," he read out.

"What!" I shrieked, tearing the letter from his hands and holding it up to the light.

It was even as he had read, and I let the letter drop with a groan. Who had done this? Then I suddenly perceived that I wore not my own velvet jacket, but a long sealskin palatote, not my close straw hat, but a small velvet bonnet, and that my fur muff had been changed for a sealskin one.

"That girl—that girl—" I cried, and sank half fainting again on a pile of luggage.

"You see it's no use, miss," went on the man; "you're caught and had best give in; Captain Anderson will be in our hands before morning, I daresay. The best thing you can do is to go back quietly with us to London, and I daresay Colonel Egerton will come round in time. Cab ready, Jones."

"My boxes!" I cried.

"No luggage with the name of Egerton to be found," replied the policeman.

"But with the name of Montgomery—my name!" I cried.

"Nor with the name of Montgomery either, miss," he replied, with a grin.

"No, of course not," I muttered to myself; "it must have been put out at B—, and perhaps she has got it all. Of course, when I fainted she took my clothes and my muff and ticket."

And when I thought of all this I burst into tears.

"Now don't give way like that, miss," said the man; "it's no use. Of course it's a great disappointment, but, lor! you're young and the colonel will give in, no doubt. But it's never no good bolting, miss."

As he said these words he opened the door of the cab and put me into it. A policeman got on to the box by the driver; he got into the cab with me and we were driven off to the nearest hotel amongst the jeers and laughter of the assembled crowd.

Just as we started another train came in, and I could hear the boat for Boulogne—or at least I fancied it must be her—getting up steam by the pier hard by.

Oh! what would I not have given to have been on board her! Papa and Milder had been quite right—I ought never to have undertaken such a journey alone.

I had scarcely entered the hotel with my captors than we were met in the hall by a stout old gentleman, who appeared greatly agitated.

"Ah! you have found her. My poor cousin will be most thankful. Oh! Frances, Frances! to think that an Egerton should have acted as you have done! Step this way, if you please. My wife is here; she has kindly consented to come down and remain with you till you can return to town. To think of an Egerton—"

"But I am not an Egerton!" I cried.

"Not an Egerton! Heaven bless us, what do you mean, Frances?" he exclaimed, aghast. "Haven't I known you since you were a child of four, haven't I—"

"This is the first time I ever set eyes on you, or you on me," I answered, angrily. "I have people who have brought me here are making an absurd mistake. I am not Frances Egerton, but Frances Montgomery. I—"

"A girl who would run away from the best of

parents, disgrace her home, and break her father's heart for the sake of a wild ne'er-do-weel like Guy Anderson would not scorn to deny her family altogether, I can well believe," replied a pompous female, who rose from a chair in the corner of the room as we entered.

"Madam, you insult me," I returned, laughingly. "Who are you who dare to speak to me in these terms?"

"Highly, highly! Very fine indeed," she replied, angrily. "It's true I haven't seen you for some years, Frances, but for all that I remember you well enough, and no doubt you remember me."

"And very rude, very unladylike it is of you, Frances, to speak to my wife in such a manner," interrupted the old gentleman, in a highly offended tone.

I sank back on the sofa, overwhelmed by the position I was placed in.

"Oh, Heaven!" I cried, "will none of you believe me? I tell you I am not the girl you take me for; I tell you these clothes are not mine, that I fainted in the train, and the girl who was in the carriage with me—"

"Tut, tut, my dear!" replied the old gentleman. "We can see for ourselves plainly enough who you are. You can't expect us to believe such a story as that. Now take some refreshment, for I daresay you are tired and hungry after the excitement and fuss."

But I could not eat, and sat weeping bitterly, reiterating my statement that I was not Frances Egerton till I was informed that I must prepare for the return journey to London.

It was now eight o'clock—at ten or half past we should be in London again, and I supposed I should be taken to Cambridge Gardens by my captors.

I began to look forward with a fierce glee to arriving there, for Colonel Egerton at least would not mistake me for his daughter, and I should at once be allowed to go free.

I lay back, feeling very tired and exhausted in my corner of the carriage and tried to get a little sleep on my return journey, whilst the detective sat bolt upright, scarcely taking his eyes off me during the whole way.

At length we arrived at our journey's end, and I was put into a cab and driven off to Cambridge Gardens.

They must have telegraphed to Colonel Egerton to expect us, for late as it was the house was lit up and the door was at once opened for us by an old grey-headed butler. In another moment I stood within the hall.

"The colonel and Major Egerton are in the drawing-room, Miss Frances," he said, "likewise Miss Egerton," and he opened the door, the detective following.

The light dazzled me a moment, but I saw a fine-looking old gentleman standing before the fire on the rug; beside him a delicate, pale, middle-aged lady, with an exceedingly sweet face; and leaning his elbow on the other end of the chimney-piece I saw, to my surprise, the gentleman who had claimed me as his cousin at St. Aft's eight or nine months before.

"Frances," said the old gentleman, in a voice full of emotion, "Frances, I did not expect this of you."

"Do not scold her, Phillip," I heard the old lady whisper, whilst the face of the other gentleman became very sad.

"Nay, Ulrica, I am not going to scold, I am past that, but to think that my daughter—" and his voice faltered.

"Believe me, sir," I began, all my anger vanishing, and deeply touched at his grief, "I feel for you in your trouble, but there has been some mistake here. Let me explain."

"Explain! What can you say to exculpate yourself, Frances?" he replied, gravely.

"I am not Frances—not your Frances. There has been a great mistake, but they would not believe me," I cried, throwing aside my veil. "Ah! I am sorry, sorry for your sake I am not your daughter, but—"

"Good heavens! who are you! What a likeness! Who can you be?" cried Colonel Egerton, whilst Miss Egerton started back in

amazement, and I saw a look of recognition pass over Major Egerton's face.

"My name is Montgomery," I replied. "This is not the first time I have been mistaken for your daughter, as that gentleman knows," and I pointed to Major Egerton.

"Then—then—we have really been the means of stopping you on your journey and bringing you back here when you are not my daughter. This is a strange, a wonderful—"

"But this is Frances's jacket, and her bonnet," cried Miss Egerton, in bewilderment.

"Yes, I have seen your daughter, I believe," I went on, "and she took my clothes from me and gave me hers when she had managed to frighten me into a fainting fit."

And in a few words I told the colonel the history of our journey.

The detective's face, as I spoke, was a study. "And where can my daughter be now then?" cried the colonel.

"Across the channel by this time, I fear, sir," replied the detective, rather shamefacedly. "She's slipped through our fingers very cleverly."

"But there's not another boat after the one I was to catch, and which left the instant after my train got in," I replied.

"Yes, that's true, but the boat waits on Saturdays for the extra train from town at this season of the year, miss. No doubt she came on by that and is safe at Boulogne by now."

"Ay, and on the way to Paris; and before I can stop her she will be Guy Anderson's wife. Raymond, this has not been my fault, you know it, and you know what my own wishes were," said the colonel to Major Egerton.

"Yes, I know. It is no fault of yours, and do not disturb yourself on my account. I cannot regret, for myself, the loss of a girl who, it seems, would not have cared for me even if she had become my wife, though I should have been proud to have become your son-in-law."

"You are right there, Raymond, I am thankful you take it so," said Miss Egerton.

"And this young lady," said the major. "Aunt, what can we do?"

"Yes, indeed! Miss Montgomery, we owe you many apologies. Can we—no, it is too late—even if you live in town you cannot return home to-night. Dear me! are you ill?" cried Miss Egerton.

I felt ill, indeed. I had not long been out of my sick-room, and the long journeys I had that day made, the fatigue, fright and anxiety had told on me greatly. I felt my head going round and round. Everything swam before my eyes. I heard a voice, the major's voice, saying:—

"She is fainting."

I tottered, and would have fallen, but a pair of strong arms held me up. Then I was carried into the next room and laid on a sofa, and for a little while I remembered no more.

Next morning I found myself in a large, comfortable bedroom, and awoke out of a refreshing sleep to see Miss Egerton standing by my bedside. I started up.

"You are better now, my dear, aren't you?" she said.

"Oh, much better," I answered. "I fear I gave you a great deal of trouble last night, but the fact is I am only recovering from a long illness, and was quite overdone yesterday."

"Indeed, I think it is we who ought to apologise; but the likeness between you and my unfortunate niece is very strong—at least, so far as figure and general appearance go. Of course when I look at your face I see the difference. Raymond has been telling me of his strange meeting with you last summer at St. Aft's," she said, kindly.

I blushed. "It has been a strange affair altogether," I said, "and I fear Colonel Egerton must have been dreadfully disappointed when he found out the mistake last night. I fear he is much grieved about his daughter."

Miss Egerton sighed. "My dear brother is goodness and kindness itself," she replied, "but I think he has been mistaken in this matter. He wished Frances to marry his nephew, Major Egerton, but she

had set her heart on a certain Captain Anderson, who, though there was nothing very much against him, is poor and rather wild, and my brother did not like the idea of Frances marrying him. She, on the other hand, cared nothing for her cousin, and to tell you the truth I do not think he was very much in love with her. My brother will be the one who will be the most disappointed, for he had set his heart on Frances marrying Raymond."

A double knock was heard at the door at that moment, and Miss Egerton started.

"A telegram from Frances, no doubt," she cried. "I must go down and see."

She ran off, and in about an hour returned.

"It is so—they are married, but not abroad, as we all imagined. It seems Guy had had the banns published in some little out-of-the-way church in Sussex, and has lived in the parish the necessary time. So they were married there this morning, and have now gone on their way to Switzerland. Frances is of age, I must tell you, though she looks so young. I don't know that her father had any right to put the police on her track even, as he did yesterday. Will you come down now to breakfast, my dear? and then we can arrange about what you would like to do."

At the breakfast table I found Major Egerton, but the colonel did not put in an appearance. We talked together in a very friendly manner, and certainly Major Egerton did not give me the impression of being very much afflicted by the loss of his bride. On the contrary, he was gay and cheerful, talked and laughed, and did not look at all like a deserted swain.

It was decided I should make my second start for B—— that afternoon, and when the cab came to the door to take me to the station Major Egerton was ready to step into it after me. To my surprise I saw him kiss Miss Egerton and shake hands with the colonel, and a portmanteau was put on the roof of the cab by the footman.

"Are you leaving town?" I asked.

"Yes; I am going abroad for awhile," he said, quietly. "I go to Paris, and in a week or two to Italy. Perhaps we may cross together if you do not prolong your stay at B——"

"That would be nice!" I exclaimed, involuntarily, and then blushed, but I thought he looked pleased at the exclamation.

He put me carefully into the train, took his seat opposite to me, and away we went, and no adverse circumstances arose to mar our comfort. At the time appointed we reached B—— in safety.

"Good bye till to-morrow evening then," he said, as the train moved off, and I was glad to think I should have his society on the steamer, and perhaps in the train afterwards on the morrow.

He was at the station next evening to meet me at Folkestone, and took me on board the steamer, settling me comfortably in a sheltered corner on deck, wrapping me up with rugs, and doing everything in his power to make me comfortable, and then we started.

It was a calm night, and the pale moon lit up the sea with her silver beams. The sea air was wonderfully fresh and reviving, and I wished that night might last for ever as we steamed smoothly along over the placid waters.

We became great friends during those few hours and the hours that followed and those which were spent in the railway as we journeyed on towards Paris, and I felt sad when I remembered that there we must part.

"I will come and see you off to-morrow morning if you will let me," he said, as we neared the end of our journey. "I shan't be leaving Paris for a day or two yet."

"Oh! it would be so kind of you," I said, blushing a little, "but I am giving you too much trouble in asking it, I fear."

"No trouble at all," he answered. "I am only sorry that our journey together is coming to an end. When do you expect to arrive at St. Remo?"

"On Friday," I replied, rather sadly.

"Have you many friends there?" he asked.

"None," I answered.

"Then when I come there may I call on you?" he said, earnestly.

I felt the colour mounting to my cheeks. I was not going to say good bye to him for ever then in Paris, as I had feared.

"Oh! if you will come I should be so glad," I faltered.

And I believe he could see from my face that I spoke the truth, and he smiled, well pleased with himself.

"Then in a few weeks we shall meet again, I hope," he said.

I thought a great deal about Major Egerton that night, tired as I was, before I went to sleep. Before I had seen him I looked forward to being at St. Remo, because I loved Italy and the beautiful walks and views around the place I was going to, but now I thought of them no longer. I only desired to be at St. Remo, and that the time should pass quickly that I might meet Major Egerton again.

"Don't forget. I shall pay you a visit as soon as I arrive," he said, as he put me into the carriage next day as I started on my long journey southward.

And then we shook hands, the whistle sounded, and we were off.

I should have liked to put my head out of the window and look back at him, but propriety forbade, so I sat feeling very lonely and sad for some time, wishing I were at my journey's end, and thinking how dreadfully disappointed I should feel if, after all, Major Egerton should not come to St. Remo.

He had a face, however, that inspired trust and confidence, and the tone of his voice was honest and true, and I felt I might count on seeing him again with tolerable certainty.

I arrived without further adventure or mishap at my journey's end, and was soon installed in my rooms at the Villa Pignone, which I found as comfortable as our friend in S—shire had described it, and the delightful air soon began to restore my strength. After a fortnight spent at St. Remo I became quite a different person; the colour returned to my cheeks, and I grew strong and stout, quite like my old self, in fact.

I had written and given my father and sister an account of my adventures, treating them in the lightest way I could, and turning the whole affair into a joke. But Milly made it the text for a long sermon on the dangers of travelling alone, and my father said that when I returned to England I must certainly provide myself with a travelling companion or escort of some kind, for he would never feel comfortable at allowing me to travel alone again.

Before a month had passed I met Major Egerton again. True to his word he came to St. Remo and took up his quarters there for some weeks, and each day his society and companionship grew dearer and dearer to me, and I dreaded to hear him say that he must return to England and leave me alone in my beautiful solitude.

"How long did you intend to remain here when you came, Miss Montgomery?" he asked, one day. "I meant to stay for a fortnight or three weeks, but though I have been here six I don't feel as if I could tear myself away, yet it must be done some day, I suppose."

"What! are you thinking of leaving then?" I said, in an unsteady voice.

"I fear I must soon, for I have to join my regiment. My leave is nearly up. It is at Malta now," he answered.

I was silent, but tears would come into my eyes, strive as I would to keep them back.

"St. Remo will be very dull without you," I said, at last, "I have to stay here till July. What shall I do?"

"Will you really miss me?" he said, softly, taking my hand.

"Yes," I replied, not withdrawing it. "We have passed such a happy time together here. Oh! I shall miss you very much."

"Then do not let us ever part," he replied. "Frances, be my wife, and then we need never talk of being separated."

I made no reply, but my hand remained in his.

"Frances—my Frances," he said, as he drew

me towards him, "I am not making a mistake this time, am I?"

"No, I am your Frances if you will take me," I replied.

And so in a few months we were married down at the old church in S—shire, of which my father was rector. Colonel Egerton was there and Miss Egerton, also Captain and Mrs. Anderson, who had been forgiven by the colonel long before.

"And you forgive me too, don't you, Frances?" whispered Mrs. Anderson, kissing me, "though I did frighten you."

"Yes, indeed," I answered, "for if it had not been for you I should never have met Raymond."

THE GHOST OF GLOOMY HOLLOW.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"THERE it is, Mr. Dewhurst—see, among the trees! I perceive it quite plainly. Can you not do so?"

"No, Miss Merritt, I am sure I cannot see it."

"It is there. Oh! it has vanished now."

The moon, full and silvery, burst from behind a heavy bank of white clouds at this juncture and shed a mellow glow over the tall dark trees and bushes, near which Bartley Dewhurst stood with Adele Merritt leaning on his arm. About two hundred yards from where they were stood the old farm-house at which both were boarders for the summer.

Most of the guests had retired for the night, as was evident from the row of lights gleaming from the bedroom windows and the sombre darkness of the lower portion of the house.

The young man and his companion having heard the tradition of Gloomy Hollow being the scene of a horrid murder years before, and of its being haunted by the wraith of the murdered woman, resolved to give the place a nocturnal visit to learn the truth of the rumour concerning the ghost. Both were from London, Miss Merritt having as companion her intimate friend, Eva Goulding.

Bartley Dewhurst had known both girls in the metropolis, and fell in love with Eva without knowing it. He was rich, handsome, and a favourite among the ladies.

It may be well to say here that Adele Merritt was in love with him, and fondly imagined he called to see her, when Eva was receiving with her on Wednesday evenings "at home," when in truth he simply called to meet Eva. He was ignorant of the fact that he loved her, and while he was in this queer state of emotion Miss Adele set her cap for him with all the fascinating energy a beautiful girl of nineteen, well versed in coquetry, is capable of.

It was a surprise to all when they first met at the breakfast table of their hostess, Mrs. Stubbs. Of course all averred, mischievously, that they were ignorant of the fact that they all meant to rusticate in the same boarding-house. Eva blushed prettily—Adele looked supremely happy.

For reasons best known to herself Adele did not tell Eva of the projected ghost hunt. Possibly it was because by going alone with Dewhurst she would have him all to herself.

The village town clock struck twelve dismal strokes as they turned away from Gloomy Hollow to return home. A rustling in the bushes caused her to turn her head and glance back over her shoulder. She stood still a moment, then threw herself in his arms, crying:

"Oh, there it is again! Bartley, save me!"

"What is it? What is the matter?" he asked.

"The ghost of Gloomy Hollow!" she replied, in affright.

He looked back, and a chill of horror traversed his system. A tall figure draped in snowy white was moving among the trees moaning piteously. There was a dim, phosphorescent mist surrounding the apparition which gave it every

appearance of a spirit of another sphere; and when moving it made no noise, but seemed to glide over the ground as if wafted on by the gentle breeze that sighed among the rustling branches of the trees. At the back of it, space was enveloped in deep, impenetrable darkness, which showed off the shadowy figure in bold relief.

They stood looking at it a few minutes in silence, she clinging to him with perhaps more tenacity than was strictly essential to her salvation from the object of her fright—his arm around her waist.

"This is all nonsense," he exclaimed, presently. "That thing is no ghost. There are no such things. Will you wait here a moment, Miss Merritt, and I will see what it is composed of? You need not fear."

"No, no!" she cried, aghast. "You must not go and endanger yourself; you must not go, really!"

"Is it that you are afraid to remain?" he asked.

"No, not that, but I fear for you. Oh, Bartley, please stay, and we will return home together."

"Then as you are not afraid to remain," he said, "I am going after it."

And before she could raise any further objection he hurried from her side toward the white object.

She watched him breathlessly and saw the ghost glide off among the trees with Bartley in close pursuit. A few minutes passed by, and presently he returned, great beads of perspiration on his forehead, and his face snowy white.

"I almost reached its side," he said, explanatorily, "and reached out to seize it when it suddenly disappeared. It seemed to fade into air and float away."

"Strange, strange," she replied, as they walked homeward slowly. "I cannot imagine what it can be."

"It is a mystery," he replied.

Much to their surprise they found the front door standing wide open when they reached the house, and Bartley was destined to hunt for thieves before retiring for the night. But as no burglars were to be found he finally sought his couch, and soon fell asleep.

The following day Adele drew Eva aside and informed her of what had happened the previous night in the Hollow. As she went on talking Eva grew deathly pale and trembled in every limb. She was a short, slender girl of eighteen, and a perfect blonde, fair and golden haired. Adele was a brunette, and equally as handsome, but her style of beauty was as opposite to her friend's as were her bold, dashing ways.

When she finished her recital Eva whispered something to her which seemed to astonish her very much; then after a moment's serious consideration she burst into a merry peal of laughter that called forth a hundred echoes from the gloomy Hollow near by.

"Ah, good morning, ladies!" interjected the unmistakable voice of Bartley, before the reverberations ceased. "I would like to share your merriment, if it is admissible," as he rejoined the pair.

A frightened look from Eva checked the acquiescence trembling on Adele's lips, and instead she replied:

"You cannot, Mr. Dewhurst; it is our secret."

"Ah! then there is some mystery afloat. You have chosen an appropriate location to indulge in it."

And with a laugh he pointed to the Hollow.

"Our mystery is connected with that ghostly hole," said Adele, with a laugh as hearty as his. "So your opinion is not misplaced, Mr. Dewhurst."

The breakfast bell rang at this juncture, and the subject was dropped for the discussion of Mrs. Stubbs' delicious maternal repast.

The day—as indeed all the days they had spent at the Hollow Farm—was passed pleasantly. Boating and fishing in the river hard by; hunting in the forest, or spending the leisure minutes in the parlour at the piano, or

on the broad old veranda, reading Dickens, Tennyson, or Shakespeare, comprised the best part of their amusement.

All was as a fairy dream to Bartley when in Eva's company. The oftener he saw her the stronger became his love, and one night as he met her by chance he declared his passion for her and implored her to be his wife.

For a few minutes she was stunned—mute. She finally recovered her self-possession, however, and said:

"Yes, Bartley, I love you—I love you! I did not know it until now; but the awakening is bitter to me, for I cannot become your wife."

They stood on the veranda, the stars winking at each other above, the soft zephyrs rustling the vine's tendrils in musical sympathy with the lovers, and the twitter of the nestling swallows up in the eaves lending a charm to the scene never to be forgotten.

He was amazed at her answer; he did not dream of meeting with this sort of rejection of his suit. Here she confessed that she loved him, but a minute later declared she could not be his wife! Strange—strange!

"Will not?" he repeated, like a dreaming person. "Why, Eva, you love me too. And what is your reason?"

"I cannot tell you now, Bartley; I have not the courage," she replied, sadly. "But, dearest, you must know it is imperative, for by refusing your proposal I am making my own life a burden to myself."

She left him a few minutes later and entered the house. He turned from the spot feeling restless and miserable to the last degree. Was it by design or simply an accident that he met Adele down the path? She must have overheard his avowal to Eva, but he felt too down-hearted to care. A bow was exchanged and she passed into the house, while he paced the paths with nervous, restless strides. She had glanced keenly at him as they passed each other, but saw how useless it would have been to talk to him. And, beside, a smile of triumph rested on her face which she with the utmost difficulty could hide from him.

Two hours later the back door of the farmhouse opened and a white figure glided out on the porch, and from there it noiselessly made its way to a little thicket, and plunging among the bushes, was soon invisible in the gloom of the trees. It had hardly disappeared when Adele appeared in the doorway; she glanced swiftly around, and seeing the solitary figure of Bartley Dewhurst as he still paced the green sward facing the house she approached him.

"Mr. Dewhurst," she exclaimed, in a low, sweet tone, "what has happened to make you so very restless?"

"What, Adele?" he replied, turning and seeing her at his side. "Are you not in bed and asleep yet? I thought I was quite alone."

"I felt restless, and not being able to sleep, I thought I would come out and get a breath of fresh air, when I saw you," she replied, glibly. "Are you unwell?"

"No," he replied, "I am physically well enough, but when the mind is diseased it is worse than bodily illness."

"I am sorry for you!" she said. "There is—Oh, my! what is that? See, Mr. Dewhurst—among the trees there."

It might have been a moonbeam falling through the interlacing branches of the trees it was so ethereal in appearance; but it glided from one spot to another with more animation than a lifeless shadow of the fair orb of night. Then it went toward the Hollow, where it remained silently a few minutes, when a series of low, anguished sighs and moans emanated from it with such pathetic intensity as to make both of the watchers shudder. And as if to add to the weirdness of the scene, an owl uttered its plaintive cry, which was answered mournfully by another in the distance like an echo.

"It is the ghost of Gloomy Hollow," she whispered, clinging to his arm.

"It seems to be a token of ill omen to me," he replied, hollowly, as he riveted his gaze on the white object.

"Let us return to the house," she said, nervously.

"No!" he exclaimed, as a fierce resolve entered his mind. "I will find out what that thing is to-night at all hazards! See here!"

He drew a pistol from his pocket and showed it to her.

"If it is supernatural," he said, in a low tone, "a bullet from this cannot hurt it."

She gazed at the weapon a moment hesitatingly; then her face grew pale and a fierce gleam shone luridly in her beautiful eyes.

"Yes," she said, firmly, "you are right. Shoot, and if it is invulnerable I will believe in ghosts hereafter."

He was surprised at the unnatural tone of her voice, but making no comment he left her side and noiselessly approached the white figure. When in easy range of it he levelled the pistol and fired. There came a low wail—the noise as of something falling in the bushes—and hurrying toward the spot the noise came from he found the white figure lying prostrate on the ground. Stopping, he saw that it was a female in her night attire, and from her bosom a tiny stream of blood flowed, dyeing the white linen crimson. He lifted the almost lifeless form in his arms, and the moonbeams falling on her face disclosed the white features of Eva Goulding.

A deep groan burst from his lips.

"Oh, Heavens! what have I done?" he cried.

"It is Eva!" interjected the voice of Adele, as she leaned over his shoulder. "Oh, Mr. Dewhurst, is she dead?"

He placed his hand over her heart and felt a faint throbbing.

"No," he replied. "She is alive. We must carry her home."

A look of disappointment crossed Adele's face, but an instant later it cleared away. Lifting the still form in his arms, he carried her to the farmhouse, and the inmates having been aroused, the situation was explained and a physician was sent for. He arrived in due course, and was made acquainted with the facts of the case. An examination of the wound showed it to be nothing serious, and after properly attending to it, and restoring his patient to consciousness, the doctor said:

"It is evident that Miss Goulding is subject to somnambulist fits, and when in one of these states left the house and wandered about the Hollow. A lighted candle probably produced the phosphorescent halo around her which you observed, Mr. Dewhurst."

"Eva," said Bartley to the listening girl, "is this the case?"

"It is, Bartley," she replied, faintly, as he leaned over her, "and it was because of my possessing this horrid malady that I refused your offer."

"And did Adele know how you were affected?" he asked, sternly.

"Yes," she answered. "That was the secret I communicated to her when she told me of seeing the ghost of Gloomy Hollow, for, knowing my affliction, I surmised that I was the ghost you saw."

He turned and gazed reproachfully at Adele, for he now understood why she urged him to fire at the spectre when she knew who it was. She loved him, and, having overheard his confession of love to Eva, had maliciously thought her death would thwart a marriage she felt so opposed to. Jealousy is a fierce passion!

The next day Adele returned to London, and they never saw her again.

When Eva finally recovered Bartley renewed his wooing, and with such good result that he won her for his bride. And the shot had not only given him a lovely wife, but also cured her of somnambulism.

AUNT SARAH'S ROMANCE.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

"TELL me what it is all about," she asked, addressing a pretty, bright-eyed girl who was kneeling at her side. "Tell me, dear—tell your old Aunt Sarah, will you?"

The girl was sobbing violently, but at the sound of her aunt's voice, and the soft and tender way in which the words were spoken, she dried away her tears and looked up.

"He left me angrily last evening," said the girl, her eyes again filling with tears, "and he did not come this morning as he always has done up to now. And it was all my fault, my own foolish fault. Oh, aunt, what shall I do, unhappy girl that I am?"

"But tell me, dear, how it all came about?" Aunt Sarah said, drawing her niece toward her and kissing her.

"Well, we were talking of the Fraser girls," she began, "and George told me that he thought the youngest one—that's Ethel, you know—the prettiest young lady of his acquaintance. And I was put out—I know it was very silly of me, for he was not thinking what he said—and I told him that I wondered he had not preferred her to me. Then he was put out; and at length, finding that he could not pacify me, left the room without saying good bye. I have not told papa yet, and when he inquires the cause of George's absence I shall not know what to tell him."

"But he will not be absent long," Aunt Sarah replied, encouragingly, "unless your silence keeps him away."

"My silence?" said the girl, wonderingly.

"Yes, dear child. By your own confession you have been to blame. So do not make matters worse, but set to work to mend them. Sit down at the table and write George a letter, asking his forgiveness."

"But he may not forgive me," said the girl, sorrowfully.

"Oh, yes, he will," returned Aunt Sarah, "and he will love you all the more for your sincerity."

"But don't you think that George was more to blame than I?" the girl poutingly asked. "He did not even say good bye, and when he left I cried as if my heart would break."

"Yet you manifested no regret in his presence," said Aunt Sarah, chidingly, "which only hardened and embittered him."

"It was very cruel of him," said the girl, commencing to cry again, "and what you propose is more than he deserves. He ought to come to me first—and even then I don't know whether I would forgive him."

Aunt Sarah took the girl's hand and said to her, very seriously:

"Listen, dear—listen, Edith. You do not know what bitterness may follow from a careless word or hasty impulse; if you did you would value my advice a little more. What you do today you may regret to-morrow, and the thought of it may sadden and embitter all your future. You are young, but life is very short, as you will find, and every day of trouble is one day less of happiness. Be guided by your better feeling in the matter—you will not regret it—and lay aside your pride. You love George, don't you?"

"Oh, aunt, of course I do!" the girl replied.

"Then be true to your love," Aunt Sarah said, "and do not let him think that it is weaker than your pride. He will respond to you if he is worthy, and your happiness will be greater than before. So come, dear; sit down and write to him at once."

The girl still hesitated.

"I will to-morrow, aunt," she said, a little

peerishly. "Perhaps after all he could not come this morning and will explain the cause this evening. There may be even now a note from him. Shall I go and see?"

In another moment she would have gone, but her aunt's look detained her.

"You are not angry with me, are you, aunt?" said Edith, tenderly. "I appreciate your advice sincerely, and would willingly comply with it, but you see I know George better than you do—and he might take it seriously; besides—and I won't—indeed I think he ought to write to me first."

"Very well, dear, please yourself," Aunt Sarah said. "But I should have liked on this day and on this occasion specially to have spared you a sorrow. May your life be happier than mine."

The solemn way in which Aunt Sarah spoke the words, and the sad and tearful expression of her countenance, arrested Edith's resolution, and she looked up wonderingly, unable to comprehend her aunt's meaning.

"Why on this particular day?" she inquired.

"Because, dear child," replied Aunt Sarah, with emotion, "it is the anniversary of a bitter wee which has darkened my whole life and made it sorrowful. Shall I tell you the story?"

"Oh, do, dear aunt!" said Edith, forgetting her own trouble for the moment and drawing closer to her aunt in sympathy. "Do, do tell me!"

"Well, dear, this day fifteen years ago I, like you, was engaged to be married—to a man whom I loved and honoured. I needn't tell you his name—it is forgotten by all save me. He was my father's secretary—a true and upright man, and in every sense of the word a gentleman. He had won my love and he loved me in return. He sought me in marriage and obtained my father's consent.

"We were engaged to be married—the very day was fixed—when one day—it was my birthday, Edith—a dark and foul suspicion fell on him. He was accused of forgery—he, my affianced husband—the man I loved and trusted—accused of such a crime! I did not believe it, and denounced it as a lie. I flew to him and told him so, and his very look confirmed my words. He behaved grandly and nobly through it all; but, alas! our engagement was broken. I appealed to my father again and again, but my entreaties were of no avail.

"He did not prosecute him—he saved me that trial—but he dismissed him from the bank and forbade him ever to return. He left without my knowing it, left me, his home, his country, and went no one knew whither. Two years after his departure the real criminal was discovered—a wretch who had already dragged down three other honest men in his career. Oh! the joy and bitter anguish of that revelation!

"His honour was vindicated—but he himself crushed, broken-hearted as he was, whether had he gone? My father sought his family, but they knew no more of him than we; he advertised in the papers, but received no answers; he employed all kinds of contrivances—advertised in the foreign journals—but without success. He had probably wandered away and died, neglected and forlorn, in foreign lands."

Aunt Sarah stopped for a few moments, and, taking out her handkerchief, wiped away the tears from her eyes.

"And you were to have been married?" said Edith, in a dreamy, melancholy way. "Poor Aunt Sarah!"

"We were to have been married in ten days," she resumed. "My dress was already made, and my bridal wreath selected. I have them still," she added, smiling feebly, "old and faded though they are. But they are my richest treasures all the same—and when I die I hope that they will lie beside me in the grave."

"Poor Aunt Sarah!" said the girl, deeply moved. "How much I feel for you. And you have suffered all these years alone."

"Yes, dear child, and with the painful consciousness that all might have been right, and

that my life, so dark and cheerless, might have been serene and happy. It was a sad, inexplicable mystery, which only God can comprehend. So now you know," she added, brightening a little as she spoke, "why I wish to make you happy this particular day, and how anxious I am to spare you any future sorrow. For I have suffered long, dear Edith, and can feel for others."

"Dear aunt," said Edith, kissing her, "I will do whatever you wish, and be always guided by you in the future. Indeed I will, for I love you more than ever now."

"Thank you, dear," she replied, "you have made me feel so happy—and I am sure you will be blessed in return."

The girl sat down at the table, and, at her aunt's dictation, wrote a few lines of regretful apology to her lover, concluding by an earnest entreaty for him to come to her as soon as possible that evening.

He came; and as he kissed her and encircled her in his arms, she felt that the little cloud had disappeared, and the heaven of their love was bright and joyous as before.

Three months later Edith was married. A large assemblage greeted them at the conclusion of the ceremony, and warm congratulations passed from every side. Aunt Sarah was among the congratulators; and as she kissed the bride and wished her life-long happiness a tear of anguish started to her eyes.

CHAPTER II.

ONE day—a few days after the return of the young couple, when they had settled down and entered into household life with all its little worries and perplexities and cares—Edith called upon her aunt.

In spite of the extra claims upon her thoughts and time that her new position as a wife occasioned, she had never forgotten the touching story of her aunt's great sorrow, but thought of it and dreamed of it again and again. Nothing she had ever heard or read had made so powerful an impression on her mind, or had so deeply stirred her sympathies.

She had been more loving and confiding to her aunt in consequence, and did her very best to cheer and comfort her. Their mutual affection was thus strengthened, and marriage, so far from diminishing their intercourse, only brought them closer to each other.

"We have decided to leave England next week," said Edith, looking lovingly at her aunt, "and I have come once more to ask you to accompany us. Do come."

"Would it be giving you pleasure—and are you sure you would not find my presence bothersome?" she responded, with a smile. "Recollect you have a husband now, who may not share your tastes in everything."

"Oh, George would be so pleased if you would come," said Edith, earnestly. "He wants someone to accompany me, and you above all others."

"Very well then, I will come," Aunt Sarah said. "The change will do me good; and I shall be so pleased to travel in your company, for you are not used to long voyages, and may need a deal of looking after," she concluded, kissing her.

The next week they started. They travelled two months in France and Germany, and, after passing a few weeks in Switzerland, descended into Italy.

They were staying at a little village in the neighbourhood of Lake Como—a beautiful place reposing on the slope of a vine-clad hill, with a limpid stream meandering at its base, and an enchanting view of the lake beyond. It was such a lovely spot—so rich in natural surroundings, and so attractive in a hundred ways—that the little party fell in love with it at once, and took up their abode in the hotel—a very quaint but

charming residence that overlooked the valley—intending to rest there for a day or two before proceeding on their journey.

The landlord was much pleased and flattered at their warm appreciation of the place, and showed them all the attention possible. He furnished their table with the choicest wines, procured a guide to accompany them in their daily rambles, and did all he could to make their stay agreeable.

It was on the morning of their last day of sojourn that the landlord, presenting himself before them as they were starting forth on their final excursion, asked them if they wouldn't like to visit the English artist who was so well known there.

They would be well repaid, he told them, for his pictures were greatly admired, and being mostly sketches of Italian scenery—especially that of the lake and its surroundings—he thought that they might like to purchase one as a little souvenir of their visit.

They at once agreed to go; and, at the end of an hour's drive, arrived at the artist's home. It was a little villa situated at the end of a double row of fir trees, with pretty flower-beds artistically arranged on either side.

They alighted, and knocked at the door, and asking to see Mr. Hammond—such being the name of the artist—were conducted to a small studio upstairs, where they sat down and awaited his entrance.

The room was filled with pictures and sketches of all descriptions; and in a recess, secluded from the rest, was the portrait of a beautiful young girl in bridal costume—so sweet and fresh and charming that it became at once the object of attraction.

No sooner did Aunt Sarah perceive it than her face turned deadly pale, and she would have fallen had not her nephew caught her in his arms.

"My dearest aunt," said Edith, in alarm, "you are ill. Let me call for assistance."

And she rushed toward the door as she spoke.

The artist at that moment entered. He was a man between forty-five and fifty years of age, with grey moustache and beard, and a subdued, melancholy expression of countenance which bespoke past suffering. He bowed to the company, and, perceiving the state of affairs, hastened to offer them his services.

Aunt Sarah eyed him eagerly as he approached, and with a sudden scream of joy fainted.

"My own lost love!" he exclaimed, after the first shock of surprise was over. "My stolen bride! Oh, God, what happiness!"

She opened her eyes and softly called him by his name.

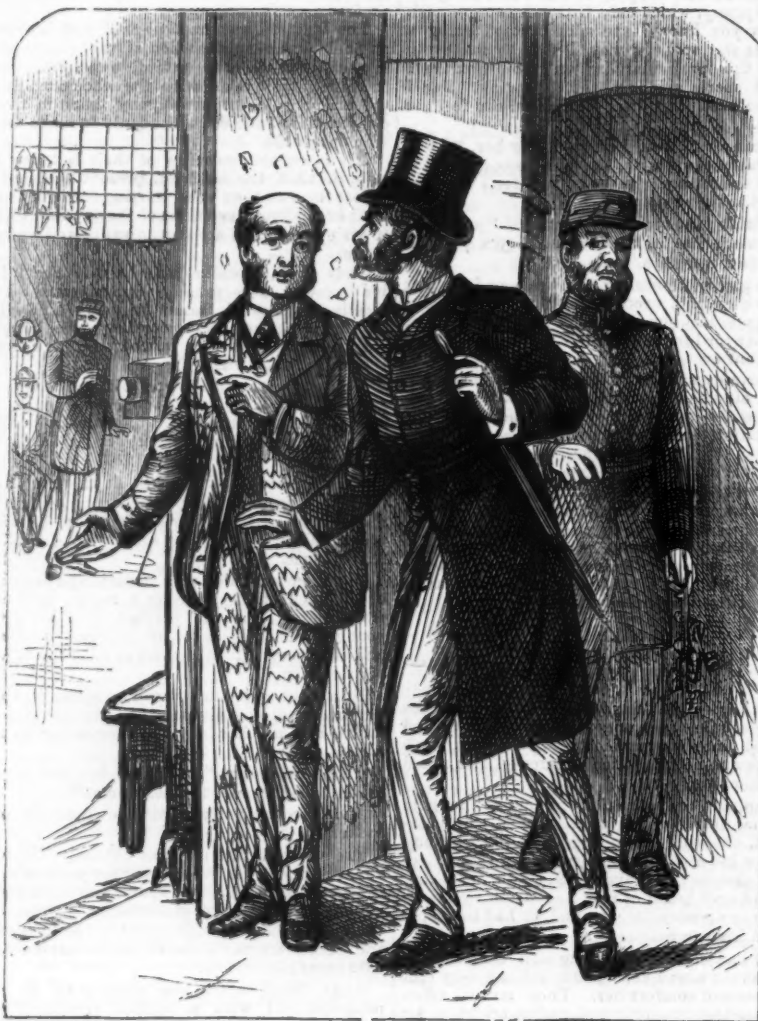
"Alfred, my beloved Alfred," she exclaimed, sobbing with emotion, "it was the world's injustice, not my pride, that sent you hither. God knows I would have followed you anywhere, and shared the hardest, bitterest lot with you without repining. We did all that was possible to find you, and after your innocence was proved my father would have given half his fortune to have reinstated you. But I have been faithful to your memory, Heaven knows, and my heart, my poor, suffering heart, was merged in yours."

He took her hand in his and gently smoothed her brow.

"I never doubted you," he said, "never, never for a moment. I journeyed here because I could not live beneath the shadow of the dark reproaches that assailed me. But I never doubted you. It was the world that was unfaithful—the world that was unjust—not you."

"But you are cleared now," Aunt Sarah replied, brightly smiling through her tears; "all the past is forgotten, except the deep injustice that was done you, for which the world will now strive to make amends."

"Then my innocence has been proved at last?" he eagerly inquired.



["GREAT HEAVENS!" EXCLAIMED SAYLES. "IT'S RICHMOND!"]

"For thirteen years," she replied. "Oh, if we had only found you! What years of suffering it would have spared both you and me!"

"It was from a wish to save you future trial," he exclaimed, "that I resigned myself to solitude. Had I followed my own inclinations I would have urged you to fly with me and share my fortunes in another land. But that would have strengthened if not confirmed the evidence of my guilt. And so I left, trusting that you would forget me, and hoping and praying that you might be happy in another's love."

"Never, never!" she exclaimed. "I loved you alone, and love you still. Generous, noble-hearted Alfred! If I am no longer young, and my beauty has departed, my heart at least is as it was before. Take it, Alfred—and with it all the fortune I possess. They are both of them yours."

And she laid her hand in his.

Alfred returned to London, and they were shortly after married. Many friends were present at the ceremony, and it was a matter of surprise to all that the bride should have worn a wreath so old and faded, affording such a contrast to the other portions of her toilette.

But the cause was known to a few, and nothing could have stirred their hearts more joyously than the sight of these two suffering souls thus providentially restored to happiness.

TWO BIRDS.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

I AM an old detective of Scotland Yard, and have had many an experience in my time of hunts after criminals, resulting now in success, now in failure. And to my mind luck has a great deal to do with it one way or another. Suppose a diamond is lost on the ground at night. Well, now, if you should strike a match, the light might catch your eye from the diamond by luck. But then, too, the match might burn down to your fingers, and you would have to drop it and be in the dark. That's just detective business; the brain is only a matchlight, after all is said and done.

But I don't mean to despise brains. "Contrary-wise," as Tweedledee says in the book. A fool may, to be sure, put his hand out in the dark and his fingers may light on the very truth. But even a match-light is better than just pawing about everywhere and nowhere in pitch darkness.

I don't know that I can better give my ideas as to the luck in our business than by telling you about two cases I had to work up. Argument is not exactly my "shop," but facts, sir, facts are what I'm strong at.

Let's see. In the summer of 186—, Mr Thomas Sayles employed me to discover a fellow who had very ingeniously defrauded him. Sayles's story was about this:

At the Epsom races of that year he had made two or three entries. And, as luck would have it, "Dominique," of whom he had no particular expectations, came in first, not only astonishing his owner, but very many of the knowing ones. In fact, the horse manifested such powers as led to very large offers being made for him. The most favourable of these was that of Mr. Henry Lysaght. This gentleman offered to assume all of Sayles's racing obligations (and his books were by no means in a favourable condition), and to pay five hundred pounds cash.

Sayles agreed, except that he wanted one thousand pounds down. This sum Lysaght declined to offer; not that he thought it made the price too large, but he professed his inability to see his way to it. Finally, on parting from Sayles, as they left the chop-house at which they had lunched together (after their journey up to London in company) Lysaght made an appointment for twelve the next day, thinking he might find some way of increasing the amount of "boot" which he would give, as he very much wished to become the owner of so valuable a horse as "Dominique" promised to be.

The next day at twelve, at Mr. Sayles's house, a visitor inquired for him. But it turned out not to be Mr. Lysaght; a stranger appeared who gave his name as Charles Richmond. He stated that he had been sent to conduct the negotiation on the part of Lysaght, who had been very suddenly summoned to the north of Scotland on very urgent business.

The conversation was then further continued by Richmond's statement that Lysaght, after a rapid survey of his affairs, had not seen his way to a cash payment of one thousand pounds down.

There might, perhaps, be ways of paying the amount, if only it was not to be cash. The result of the negotiation finally was that Sayles agreed to take one thousand pounds in a note from Lysaght at three months, the rest of the bargain to be as before settled on Lysaght's part. Sayles to execute a bill of sale of "Dominique" to Lysaght, and to give to Richmond an order on William Henly, the keeper of Sayles's stables at Duxburgh, where "Dominique" then was, so that he might temporarily take care of him until he should more particularly hear from Lysaght.

Two days afterward Sayles received from Charles Richmond by messenger a letter dated Edgware Court, London, enclosing a note signed Hy. Lysaght, as agreed on, and the bill of sale and order, as already mentioned, which papers Sayles was asked to execute, which he accordingly did, and returned by the messenger.

About two weeks after this, on attempting to have this note cashed at the house where it was made payable, Sayles was informed that Lysaght had withdrawn his account some months previously; and on further investigation it was discovered that the signature was a forgery.

Mr. Lysaght had signed receipts for dividend payments in many places on the books of the firm, and on comparison no room was left for doubt as to the forgery. On communicating with Lysaght on his return from Scotland (for he had gone away in the manner and for the object stated by Richmond), it appeared that he knew nothing about any Charles Richmond; but said the description seemed to agree with the recollection he had of a young fellow who had been for the last two years in the company of the most notorious gamblers and sporting characters who attend the various meets.

Search after Richmond and "Dominique" by Mr. Sayles having led to no results, he came to me; and I may as well sum up all that I found out in this: That a Charles Richmond had lodged at Edgware Court, and had left there on the very day that Sayles executed the bill of sale and order; and that a scrap of paper found in his room with "Charles Richmond" in ink on it seemed to be in the real handwriting of the young rascal, as both the letter to Sayles and the order which Henly had preserved seemed

to be identical in character. This scrap of paper had written on it the numbers from one to thirty-six out of their order, in a square. This I preserved, more on a mere vague suggestion that it might in some way serve as a clue than for any rational idea of its importance. The horse I believed to have been taken out of England to the Continent, and probably to France, but I am bound to say no evidence of the fact existed. All Henly could tell us was that a young man giving his name as Richmond had appeared with four strangers, and Henly, recognising his master's signature, had delivered up "Dominique," giving himself no further concern about the matter.

In the spring of the next year Mr. Gaineway, a jeweller, came to me privately one day and announced that he had been robbed by his clerk, Edward Fosdilt, under very peculiar circumstances. He wished me to find where the stolen property, a valuable diamond, now was. The search must, for reasons to be mentioned presently, be conducted with the utmost secrecy.

It seemed that in the preceding February, Lord Treherne, a very rich and constant buyer at Mr. Gaineway's, had come to him and left with him a very large and valuable diamond for safe keeping.

Mr. Gaineway was at first very unwilling to accept the responsibility, but his lordship insisted, and the jeweller finally yielded, telling him that he must, however, charge a very considerable premium as insurance. His lordship then told him that he was going abroad, to be absent six months or a year, and that with the jewel sealed directions would be deposited to be followed by Gaineway if at the end of six months his lordship should still be absent, or if he should die before that time.

Edward Fosdilt had been in the jeweller's employ since the preceding October as book-keeper, and his conduct and mode of living, to all appearances, had been entirely satisfactory ever since his engagement. Accordingly, Gaineway had been no less surprised than horrified to learn from the lips of his clerk, only two hours back, the following facts:

Fosdilt had been for some time embezzling cash from the money-drawer, and had been gambling with it by night. Grown reckless by constant loss and by his success in covering up his transactions by false entries in the books, he was becoming increasingly in debt to the drawer from day to day.

Fearful of ultimate discovery in case luck should not turn in his favour, he conceived the idea of stealing the diamond and making off with it. He had heard some of the conversation with Lord Treherne, and knew where the jewel was kept.

He had noticed that his employer rarely visited the small private vault in a drawer of which it was placed; the small vault stood in a corner of a much larger vault in which the more valuable part of the stock was each night deposited.

He managed to make false keys to the shop and to the vaults. He had stolen the diamond at about half past four Tuesday morning. On Tuesday night, with a large sum of money taken from the drawer, he had gone to the gaming-rooms, and luck had at last turned largely in his favour; now that he could afford to be honest, he resolved to restore both the diamond and the stolen money; it was so near daylight that he postponed the attempt.

During the day, however, he did put back the cash and fixed his accounts so that the restoration would not appear.

In the evening he received a letter signed "X" which made an appointment in a retired corner of Regent's Park at midnight, adding that if it was not kept his employer would be informed of his "robberies."

He accordingly went, and there met a man who proposed to him to commit a joint burglary on the shop; this Fosdilt refused to do, and on the man's threatening to expose him Fosdilt perceived that he knew only of the money embezzlements, and was not aware that the money had all been returned.

Consequently he persisted in his refusal, and on his companion's threatening force, ran away, and after considerable difficulty succeeded in evading his pursuer and in reaching his lodgings.

It was too late that night to attempt to replace the diamond. At one o'clock next morning, on returning to his lodgings for the purpose of commencing his expedition, he was stunned to find on the lid of the desk (where he kept the tin box in which was the diamond) a paper with a knife driven through it deeply into the wood; on the paper was written "Remember X." His fears were realised; the tin box had been forced; the diamond was gone, and fifty pounds besides.

He immediately proclaimed that he had been robbed, but said nothing of the loss of the diamond. (And here, at this point, Mr. Gaineway showed me a paragraph in the "News" of Friday, mentioning the robbery at No. 23, Palmer's Lane, which was Fosdilt's lodging-house.) On reflection, however, he had at length concluded to make a clean breast of it to his employer, which he had accordingly done that very Friday morning.

"Now, Mr. Keenege, I don't want this known first and foremost on account of Lord Treherne; he's been in my shop this very day merely to give me another sealed envelope of directions and to say he would be absent a year in India. If we can get the diamond within the year quietly, so much the better.

"Then there's the boy, Edward; he appears to have repented, and swears he will never gamble again, and he don't want to lose his place and his character; and I've concluded to risk it, keeping one eye open on him. Finally, that rascally X will not know that we are on his track if no proclamation of my loss is made."

I assented to this view of the case because it evidently was better to conceal our suspicions and plans than let them be known to anyone. Meantime, I impressed upon Gaineway my very strong suspicions that Edward Fosdilt's repentance might only be a sham repentance, and that he had better keep not only one but half a dozen eyes on him, if he could do it without betraying the fact of his extra watchfulness. There were other ideas which I kept to myself.

I went to 23, Palmer's Lane, and made some investigations of my own, beside getting all I could from the police, who had the matter in hand. As near as I could ascertain it came to this: there was absolutely no evidence that any robbery had been perpetrated at that place if Fosdilt were to be thrown out of account. The paper, the knife, the desk, the forced tin box, and the announcement of robbery in the middle of the night, might have all been mere stage evidence, a part of a play set out for the amusement of the police and the public.

Nor would the threatening letter have proved anything more; but Fosdilt said he had destroyed it, as would of course have been but natural. Was then "X" a mere figment? But if so then Fosdilt must have been the real thief.

Had he lost the diamond? Did he have it? In either case, why should he accuse himself? Gaineway would not have missed it for some time to come in all probability. Why should Fosdilt have brought any suspicion whatever upon himself?

Why not at least stand on the equality of presumptive honesty with the other employes of Gaineway? I contented myself with keeping a watch on Fosdilt's movements, so that he might not some fine day be missing and the diamond be gone with him.

But at the same time the possibility of "X" was very great. I had too often failed to get clues of real, bona fide thieves, who had afterward been arrested and proved to be guilty, to doubt the possibility of a real "X." Only, as a mathematical friend of mine on the force said, "He seemed to be a very 'unknown' quantity," which was vexatious, very.

Two weeks after the Gaineway case had been in my hands I saw a very queer advertisement in the "News." Ah, here it is! I cut it out

and pasted it in this book for safe keeping. I will read it:

"6s CUDL: hole corner necessary the jeweller dust paris am of is fill one scattering square watched are have must brussels harwich I rotterdam meet day by think to eleven fourteen ten place ready hebby three night at."

I resolved to translate this puzzle some day, and so pasted it in my book. It so happened that shortly afterward I came across the slip with Charles Richmond's name among my papers, and by chance pasted it below the other one; but I did not notice the fact at the time. However, that afternoon I thought I would go at the puzzle; and then my eye struck Richmond's square of numbers.

And somehow it came into my head that the "6s" of the advertisement corresponded to the "six times six are thirty-six" of the numbers in the square. But if the "6s" corresponded to the six each way in the square, what did "cudlr" correspond to?

In looking at the square I noticed the numbers were arranged in a sort of irregular regularity; might not the "cudlr" be an indicator of such an arrangement?

Well, I went to work to decipher that puzzle, and at last I succeeded. With some exultation I wrote down the advertisement in its new form, thus:

"At ten night day fourteen three must meet eleven Hedby Place ready by Harwich to Rotterdam; have one jeweller, is necessary. Scattering dust fill are I think Brussels square the of corner Paris hole. Am watched."

Another flash of light illumined my mind. "Jeweler, Harwich, Rotterdam," seemed to connect themselves with the Gaineway case. And the meeting of confederates to take the diamond was appointed for ten o'clock, night of the fourteenth; that was two days off; the jeweller was wanted to protect the thieves in their bargaining with the diamond Jew merchants of Rotterdam, who would buy readily enough.

The latter part beginning with "scattering" and ending "hole" I was inclined to think meant nothing, acting as misleading dummy words; "Am watched," however, appeared to have an application. But if so, Fosdilt must be the criminal.

And so, indeed, it proved. The four confederates were tracked to No. 11, Hedby Place, and just as the diamond was being handed over by Fosdilt the police burst in and secured them and the missing jewel.

The next day, shortly after I left the room where Fosdilt was being photographed, I happened to meet Sayles.

"Well, Keenege," says he, "do you have better luck for other people than you had for me since I saw you last year?"

In reply to this, I told him, without names, the Gaineway case.

"And," said I, "I've just left him getting his picture taken."

"I should like to see that fellow," said Sayles. "All right, sir," said I; "come right back."

We stepped into the room, and I pointed him out.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Sayles. "It's Richmond!"

And so it turned out to be. The young rascal came to the conclusion that confession was the better part; so he gave the courts no trouble, but pleaded guilty, and was sent to penal servitude for one-half the full limit in consideration of that and his youth.

The explanations he gave I believe were the exact truth. His real name I shall conceal, calling him Fosdilt, by his last alias.

As to "Dominique," he had long desired to steal a horse and run him off and sell him. His experience among the gamblers and thieves at the racing meets had early educated him to boldness of plan and steadiness of execution.

So when he overheard Lysaght and Sayles talking in the chop-house about the transfer of "Dominique," and saw how earnestly Lysaght desired to own him, he immediately thought he

would try to get that very horse. As it happened, he had obtained possession of a letter of Lysaght's, dropped on the race-course by the person to whom it was addressed, and he was thinking of imitating his hand-writing and using it.

While revolving these thoughts in his mind he happened to be at the Great Northern Railway station at midnight, and there saw Lysaght leave for Scotland, and heard enough of his conversation with a friend to whom he was talking at the time to be able to tell Sayles the substantial truth about the facts of Lysaght's absence.

This set the seal upon his purposes; he matured his scheme, deceived Sayles, and forged the note. Duxburgh, he had ascertained, was remote from telegraphic communication; so, immediately on receipt of the order and bill of sale, he took the train at the station, from which he had sent his messenger, and so made sure of being ahead of any discovery of the forgery. "Dominique" was run off to France and sold for a pretty large sum to a not very reputable French nobleman connected with racing interests.

As to the Gainway diamond there had been no gambling or stealing from the drawer at all, that being merely a part of Fosdill's ingenious romance. He had finished the key to the private vault very late on toward daylight, and thought it the best policy to take only the diamond on that occasion, meaning to make another descent the following night. In the meantime he deposited the diamond in a parcel with the Valuable Parcels Safe Keeping Company, Limited, "Where," said he, "Mr. Gainway should have left it."

On the next night, just as he was about opening drawers in the private vault, he thought he heard a noise at the outside door; thinking it might be the police, he endeavoured to maintain absolute quiet; his dark lantern was closed, and he stood perfectly still.

At this very moment a most inopportune impulse to sneeze took hold of him; he drew out his handkerchief to repress it, but in vain. Fearful of capture, he now locked the vault doors and retreated by a prepared window and over several walls which he had to cross.

On arrival at his lodgings he found that the private vault key was lost, and further that his handkerchief was gone. Not knowing where these had been dropped, he visited the shop early in the morning, saying he had to send off an important letter which he had mislaid among his books, perhaps.

He managed so well that the still open window was not detected (as he pretended to unfasten it for light), and he was immensely relieved to find that there were no signs on the floor either of the shop or the larger vault of either of the missing articles.

This day Mr. Gainway was absent, and was expected to be absent again on the morrow. To his great horror, however, he saw Lord Treherne in the afternoon on the footway. He now relinquished the idea of making another false key, which he had planned, and determined to get the diamond and leave at once. On inquiring, however, at the Safe Keeping Company's Office, it was found that the lock corresponding to his parcel was out of order, and that it would take one whole day, probably, to get it right.

The next day Gainway was still absent. Fosdill momentarily expected him or Lord Treherne to appear, but neither did so. Meanwhile it flashed across his mind that his handkerchief might be in the private vault. He could not help thinking of this all day, and finally he resolved to examine it—not that he expected to be able to find anything, but because he must at least look.

He did look, and saw something white caught in the locked vault door. It projected so slightly as not to attract any notice but his own. He got a chance to look more closely at it and found that it was indeed a handkerchief end, and of course his own. With a sharp penknife he managed to poke it in (for it was

impossible to get it out) so that it was invisible and without discovery.

What now was to be done?

He inquired again that evening at the Safe Keeping Company's office, but his look was still unyielding, and he must wait.

That night he heard from a fellow clerk that Lord Treherne had been in inquiring for Mr. Gainway, and that Mr. Gainway had certainly returned, for the clerk had seen him in a cab.

What should now be his line of procedure?

His handkerchief was doubtless in the vault. Lord Treherne would call, the loss would be discovered, and with the loss his handkerchief. Meantime the diamond could not be reached. Should Fosdill run away? What! and leave the prize? But how to get hold of it and yet preserve his liberty?

In this emergency he invented X and all the rest of it, calculating that so he would at least not be supposed to have the diamond in his own control, and that both Lord Treherne and Mr. Gainway would prefer to try to catch the supposed X by his means than to lock him up and publish their loss to the world.

As matters turned out, Treherne did not even ask to see the stone. While, during this pretended confession, on Gainway's going to the vault, naturally enough Fosdill followed close on his heels, and calculating on Gainway's excitement brushed by him rapidly, managing to grasp the handkerchief unperceived as soon as the private door was opened. He saw at once how much more credit his confession would have if seemingly unforced by any circumstance.

This ingenious scheme must have been completely successful but for the double-barrelled luck of my pasting those two papers together. And so my two birds turned out to be only one after all; but brought down with a chance shot, when both eyes were shut.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE great bell of St. Paul's is now ready for delivery, and it is hoped that it may be hung in its place ready to ring on Easter morning. The question is, how is it to be got to London? As it now lies in the foundry at Loughborough it weighs 17½ tons. The railway company have declined to convey it; and even if they were willing to try, there would be the necessity of transshipping it to and from the railway station at either terminus. There is no wagon that would carry such a load, and the authorities are slowly coming to the determination that they will have to build one especially for this service, to convey the bell by rail from Loughborough to St. Paul's.

DOCTOR PARKER is preparing a fresh sensation for his congregation. He has made arrangements to have the City Temple illuminated with the electric light. This will be done in connection with the undertaking of Mr. Edison to light the Holborn Viaduct and some houses in the neighbourhood with his lamps. It is an additional attraction to Doctor Parker that this patronage of science will not cost him anything. Mr. Edison's agents, recognising the advantage of the advertisement, will light the City Temple for nothing.

SOME of the owners of race-horses have made a good thing of it last season on stakes alone. The list was published a day or two ago. Mr. Crawford gained £17,919; Mr. Lorillard, the American who owns Iroquois, a few pounds less; Sir John Astley, upwards of £14,000; Lord Rosebery, nearly as much; Lord Falmouth, a little over £12,000; Sir George Chetwynd, £11,300; and Mr. Jardine, £11,480. Of course all expenses have to be deducted from these sums; but still they must have left a considerably large amount to the good for the different parties named.

THE excellent idea of the sale of good soup in the poorer streets, so general in Paris, would undoubtedly meet with well-deserved popularity here. This system is wisely practised in some

populous parts of Paris for the benefit of work-people going to their several employments in the cold and discomfort of a wet winter's morning, and would be more successful in London and other large towns, where tea and coffee, too often most inferior in quality, are the only counter attractions to the "drop of something to keep the cold out" so generally indulged in by the British workman. The art of soup-making is but indifferently understood in England; but if some enterprising person would set up a small stall at some busy place, like Covent Garden Market, at about six a.m., and would sell a good article at a low price, it would prove no unprofitable speculation.

HUMOUR is not yet dead, but sleepeth. "An Egyptian Fella" has written on the Dun Echr outrage. In this country—that is in the land of the Pharos—such outrages, he says, are thought nothing of, simply because they are of every-day occurrence. The principal resurrectionists, he proceeds to say, in a spirit of irony, are "your own countrymen, who, for the sake of money I suppose, do not hesitate to plunder our most ancient and sacred tombs, and I have seen some of the bodies here in London among your national treasures: showing, I would presume, that the conduct of these body thieves is approved of the nation. I would, therefore, beg your countrymen, your policemen, your gentry, to let this fuss subside. It is only the body of one earl that is missing." There is a wise saying which may be appropriately quoted here—"With what measure ye mete it shall be meted to you again."

A CORRESPONDENT suggests in consequence of frauds having taken place, that the deeds of marriage settlements should be kept by a State official in the same way that wills are.

PLAYGOERS will be glad to hear that no such calamity as that which occurred recently at the Ring Theatre, Vienna, is possible at any of the London play-houses. At least the managers are positive enough about the matter. Mr. Hollingshead, who is always to the front on these occasions, produces the familiar statistics. He says: "During the last fifty-three years in England, Ireland, and Scotland, fourteen London theatres and nine provincial theatres have been destroyed, but not one member of the public has been burnt. The only deaths from fire in these cases have been two—a manager and a dresser." As for the arrangements for exit at the Gaiety they are perfect. They are ten in number, "through one of which a stage coach might be driven." Mr. Harris is not, however, to be outdone by Mr. Hollingshead. Drury Lane Theatre, we are assured, stands "unrivaled, in this or any other country, for the magnificent arrangements for ingress and egress, and the entire house can easily be cleared in a shorter space of time than perhaps any other theatre in the world. The doors are always open and lamps suspended in every nook and corner of the auditorium and passages." At the Royal Comedy extraordinary attention has been bestowed upon the entrances and exits to the various parts of the theatre. Lamps are used in all the passages to give light in case of any temporary disarrangement of the gas. Mr. Henderson naturally claims a superiority for his theatre over all others. He says: "It is estimated that the theatre, when full, can be emptied in less than two minutes, possessing in this respect marked superiority over any theatre in London." At the Princess's everything is fireproof. It has every corridor, staircase, and entrance lighted with oil as well as gas, so that no failure of the gas could put the house into darkness, and, when crammed, is cleared nightly of all the audience in four minutes, whilst every employé is regularly drilled in his duties by the engineer of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade of the district. Let us hope that in the hour of need these arrangements will prove as perfect as they are now alleged to be.

TWO companies are said to be in course of formation in New York for the purpose of reducing—by means of swift steamers—the passage across the Atlantic to five days. One company proposes to carry cabin passengers

only, and to run between New York and Milford Haven. The other scheme is to construct vessels without masts, and with the decks completely domed, so that the vessels could dash through any sea.

MR. GLADSTONE on one occasion advised English farmers to turn their attention to market gardening, and was much laughed at for his pains. However, English market garden produce has been finding its way into strange markets. English potatoes, cauliflowers, and celery have been imported to New York, and have realised great prices—8s. a dozen for cauliflowers, and 1s. 3d. a stick for celery! This is turning the tables on the Yankees.

THE Raphael Society which has been founded under the presidency of the Duke of Westminster for the purpose of establishing a national gallery of copies of paintings by first-rate artists of all the principal works in the various galleries both in this country and on the Continent, has lately held its first general meeting. Lord Ronald Gower was elected chairman of the Council.

MISS CLARA LOUISE KELLOGG, the well-known prima donna who used to be such a favourite with opera goers some ten years ago, is about to be married. The bridegroom is Mr. Whitney, a very rich merchant of New York. The lady is exceedingly wealthy, having earned over £50,000 during her last operatic career.

A WATCHMAKER at Vouvy, in Switzerland, claims to have made a watch that will run years without winding up. A box containing two watches entrusted to the municipal authorities on January 19, 1879, has just been opened, and the watches were found going.

THE Prince of Wales has accepted the presidency of the Smithfield Club for the year 1883.

AN interesting experiment in the lighting of a private house of moderate dimensions took place recently at Cheltenham. Sir Alexander and Lady Ramsay invited a large circle of their friends to witness the result. The drawing-room at 2, Montpellier Parade, was brilliantly lighted with two "brush" lamps. A lamp was placed outside each window, having a white blind as a background, and inside the window was a light gauze curtain to soften the light. The effect produced was exceedingly good, for though the room was as bright as daylight, there was a softness in the light which astonished everybody. The lamps were attached by wires to the dynamo-electric machine at the Winter Gardens, forming, in fact, a portion of the "circuit" of electricity that illuminated the Fancy Fair. Large houses, such as Alwick Castle, Trentham, and Hatfield Hall, have been lighted with electricity, but its introduction to ordinary residences is a novelty.

It appears that an "Anti-Crinoline" League has been formed. The members take the following pledge: "We, the undersigned, believing that the artificial aid to dress known as crinoline or hoop is inconvenient and ungraceful to the last extent, hereby engage ourselves never to wear the same, whatever attempt is made on the part of milliners to impose this tyranny on the ladies of England."

It is reported that an anonymous admirer of the late Lord Beaconsfield has transmitted to his lordship's trustees the funds necessary to clear Hughenden Manor of all encumbrances. The sum is something over £50,000, and the donor gives no clue whatever to his identity. Some people believe that he is a member of the great firm of Rothschilds, but this is nothing more than a guess, and the only definite fact is that Mr. Coningsby Disraeli will be enabled to take possession of his uncle's property free of all burdens.

It looks as though every great lady in England had taken up the idea of wearing no goods but those of home manufacture. The Princess Helena is at the head of the movement. She is joined by her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Edinburgh; the Princess Frederica, the Duchess of Cambridge, and the Duchess of Teck are with them. Seven more duchesses—including those of Abercorn, Argyll, Manchester, Sutherland, Westminster, and Marlborough—place the

movement on what may be called the highest pinnacle. Then there are twenty-three marchionesses, including her ladyship of Salisbury and her ladyship of Bath. There follow no fewer than sixty countesses. Among them the Ladies Breadalbane, Carnarvon, Dalkeith, Denbigh, Dudley, Fitzwilliam, Granville, Jersey, Lonsdale, and Zetland, who all pledge themselves to wear henceforth British woollen material. Vicountesses, ladies, honourable, and untitled ladies also appear in the list in immense numbers, demonstrating that the movement set on foot by the Countess of Bective has been generally followed by aristocratic ladies.

THE SCARLET THREAD.

WALKING on the pier at Portsmouth,
By some idle fancy led,
I picked up a bit of cable,
And I saw it held a thread—
Just a thread of vivid red.

In and out 'twas strongly twisted
With a firm and subtle skill;
I must all the rope unravel—
If to get it were my will.
But what purpose did it fill?

Then a sailor, who had watched me,
Seen my eager, puzzled air,
Said, "I see that you are wondering
Why that scarlet thread is there.
I can tell you, if you care.

"Every rope in England's navy
With the hemp must intertaine
Just a thread of vivid scarlet.
Be the cable coarse or fine,
It must hold this scarlet line.

"So, if any thief should steal it,
He can't pick the thread away;
And Her Majesty, God, bless her!
Can reclaim it any day,
And with naught at all to pay."

"Thank you." And I onward wand'ring,
Thinking of life's coil of care,
And how in it there was mingled,
Here and there, and everywhere,
Love's bright filament so fair.

Interwoven so exactly
With the beating of our heart
That with life true love is blended
With such sweet and subtle art
Nothing sunders them apart.

Oh, Love's thread so bright and golden,
Binding Love to home and wife,
So that life's oft-tangled cable
Parts not in the stormy strife—
Oh, Love's golden thread through life!

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

A PERSON who undertakes to rise himself by scandalising others might as well sit down on a wheelbarrow and try to wheel himself.

HAVE a care in making any man your friend twice, except the rupture was by your own mistake, and you have done penance for it.

A VIRTUOUS effort may fail, but not a virtuous life.

It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience.

THE gem cannot be polished without affliction, nor man perfected without adversity.

VICE stings us even in our pleasure, but virtue consoles us even in our pain.

SURELY some people must know themselves; they never think about anything else.

FAST horses soon tire, and fast young men are a good deal like them. The youth who

"goes it strong" at twenty will find himself at forty-five with a tombstone growing out of his head.

THERE is nothing purer than honesty; nothing sweeter than charity; nothing warmer than love; nothing brighter than virtue; and nothing more steadfast than faith. These, all united in one mind, form the purest, the brightest, and most steadfast happiness.

STATISTICS.

THE estimated charge of the Civil List for the year ending next March is £408,000, comprising £60,000 for Her Majesty's privy purse, £131,260 salaries for the household and retiring allowances, £172,500 the expenses of Her Majesty's household, and £13,200 for royal bounty, alms, &c.

GREAT BRITAIN has forty-nine per cent. of the carrying trade of the world, and actually carries fifty-two per cent. of all merchandise. Of the steam tonnage of the world she owns 2,580,000 tons, against 1,530,000 owned by all other nations combined.

STREET TRAFFIC IN PARIS.—Some idea of the traffic on the streets of Paris is afforded by a recently published statement giving the numbers of vehicles that have been counted passing in different streets in a day of 24 hours. The following are some of the higher numbers: Rue Montmartre, 100,000; Avenue de l'Opéra, 26,000; Boulevard de la Madeleine, 25,000; Rue Royale, 20,000; Boulevard des Italiens, 20,000; Causée d'Antin, Pont Neuf, from 11,000 to 18,000; Boulevard St. Denis, 16,000; Boulevard Haussmann, 13,000; Boulevard Saint Martin, 11,000; Boulevard du Palais, 10,000; and so on.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SCALLOPED TOMATOES.—Drain off most of the liquor from a can of tomatoes into the boiling soup kettle. Put a layer of crumbs in the bottom of a buttered bake dish, butter them, and lay in the tomatoes, seasoned with pepper, salt, and sugar. Cover with buttered crumbs and bake, covered, half an hour; then brown.

APPLE SAUCE.—Pare, slice, and stew juicy apples with just enough water to keep them from burning. Mash when soft and broken to pieces, and beat smooth with a good lump of butter and plenty of sugar. Serve cold.

CELERY.—Celery boiled in milk and eaten with the milk served as a beverage is said to be a cure for rheumatism, gout, and a specific in cases of small-pox. Nervous people find comfort in celery.

TO PREVENT CHOKING break an egg into a cup and give it to the person choking to swallow. The white of the egg seems to caten around the obstacle and remove it. If one egg does not answer the purpose, try another. The white is all that is necessary.

POKE STEAKS.—Cook precisely as you do beefsteak, only for a much longer time, and turn oftener. When you have laid them upon a hot dish, anoint on both sides with butter mixed and heated with pepper, salt, powdered sage, and a little minced onion. Cover, and let them stand for a few minutes before serving.

A FIG PUDDING made from this recipe is not only delicious but furnishes still another way in which the frugal housewife may use her crumbs of bread to good advantage. Take half a pound of the best figs, wash and chop them fine, two teacupfuls of grated bread (crusts for one may be used), half a cup of sweet cream, one cup of sweet milk, half a cup of sugar; mix the bread crumbs with the cream, then stir in the figs, then the sugar, and the last thing get in the milk; pour into a mould or a pudding-dish and steam for three hours.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
A LONG ESTRANGE- MENT ... 241	GENE OF THOUGHT ... 263
SCARCELY SINNING ... 245	PUZZLES ... 264
HIS STRANGE CLIENT ... 247	CORRESPONDENCE ... 264
FACTS ... 248	
BELLA'S HERO: A STORY OF THE WELSH MARCHES ... 249	No.
MY DOUBLE (A NOVE- LETTE) ... 253	SCARCELY SINNING commenced in ... 261
AUNT SARAH'S RO- MANCE ... 258	A LONG ESTRANGE- MENT commenced in 272
TWO BIRDS (A SHORT STORY) ... 260	BELLA'S HERO: A STORY OF THE WELSH MARCHES, commenced in ... 275
MISCELLANEOUS ... 262	
STATISTICS ... 263	
HOUSEHOLD TALK ... 263	
SKETCHES ... 263	
POETRY ... 263	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. H.—Wash your face occasionally in a solution of borax and water. We know of nothing better for ordinary skin eruptions.

B. T.—To preserve the nails beautiful they should be kept very clean, and should be carefully cut after being held in warm water to make them flexible. A mixture of oil and pumice-stone, prepared by the druggist, will make them bright and shining, if applied with a piece of cambric skin, and gently rubbed on. The half-moon shape should be preserved at the top, and the skin at the lower part pushed carefully down, so that the half-moon there will be visible.

R. A.—To make lead pencil writing or drawing as indelible as if done with ink, lay the writing in a shallow dish and pour skimmed milk upon it. Any spots not wet at first may have the milk placed upon them lightly with a feather. When the paper is all wet over with the milk, take it up and let the milk drain off, and whip off with the feather the drops which collect on the lower edge. Dry it carefully, and it will be found to be perfectly indelible. It cannot be removed even with India-rubber. It is an old recipe and a good one.

S. T.—To clean or whiten the keys of a pianoforte, first wash the keys well with soap applied on a piece of flannel; then with the same flannel wipe it off. When perfectly dry apply powdered pumice-stone made into a paste. Allow it to remain on wet for several days. Then wipe off. It may be necessary to repeat the process two or three times.

H. G.—To destroy warts, make a strong solution of common washing soda and water. Wash the warts with this for a minute or two, and let the soda dry on them. Repeat the washing several times a day until the warts disappear.

E. H.—To keep the hands cool, bathe them occasionally in alum and water.

F. E.—If you have not a century or perpetual calendar convenient, to find out on what day of the week a certain date came, you must first ascertain the dominical or Sunday letter for the year in which the date occurs. To do this, add to the number of the year one-quarter of itself, neglecting fractions, and divide the sum by seven; then for the nineteenth century subtract the remainder from 8, or, if it is 0, from 1, and the new remainder will indicate the place of the dominical letter in the alphabet; for the eighteenth century subtract from 7; for the seventeenth century, and back to 1582, the year in which the Gregorian calendar came into operation, subtract from 6, or, if the remainder is 6, from 13; for dates previous to 1582 subtract from 3, or, if the remainder is 3 or more, from 10. But the dominical letter thus obtained for a leap-year belongs to the time after February 29, and for the preceding two months the dominical letter was the succeeding letter in the alphabet. This new remainder is also the date of the first Sunday in January for that year. The same date in February and March will fall on Wednesday; in April on Saturday, etc., as may be seen from the fact that the first days of the twelve months have annexed to them in the calendar the initials of the words, "At Dover Dwells George Brown, Esquire, Good Christopher Fines, And David Friar." For example, you desire to know on what day of the week January 29, 1810, came. To 1810 add 452, making 2262, discarding the remainder 2. Divide this by 7, which gives us 323, with 1 remainder. Subtract 1 from 8, which leaves 7, and G being the seventh letter in the alphabet, it is the dominical letter for that year. Now, as January begins with A, and the dominical letter being G, the first Sunday is the 7th of January, and the 29th is Saturday.

G. W.—To make cider, pick all the apples, rejecting those not sound, wash them clean, and afterward let them lie and get dry. Grind and press them, using no water or straw, or any substance that will give the cider an unpleasant taste, as on the purity and cleanliness of the apples depends the quality of the cider. Strain the juice through a woollen or other close bag, put into clean barrels, and set into a moderately cool place, keeping the barrel full all the time, so that the impurities may work off at the bung. After it has done fermenting, carefully rack it off, let it stand a few days, and bung it up. As the air tends to sour the cider, it is a good plan to provide a bent tin tube, one end fastened in the bung and

the other to drop into a bucket of water. This will let all the gas off, and not let the air to the cider. The quicker the pomace is pressed after being ground the lighter will the colour be, and darker if not pressed for twenty-four hours after being ground. The cider from the second and third pressing will be the richest. The reverse is the case in making wine, as a severe pressure on the mash makes sour wine. Cider-making should be conducted with all the care that wine-making is. Most any good sour apple will make cider, but more generally an apple full of juice, and not very good to eat, will make the best. The crab species perhaps excels all other apples for cider-making. When bottled up, with a little rock candy, and wired, it will, after standing some time, sparkle like champagne when opened. To get cider very strong, expose it in a tube in extremely cold weather. To keep cider sweet, allow the cider to stand until it has reached the state most desirable to the taste; then add a tumbler and a half of grated horse-radish to each barrel, and shake up well. This arrests further fermentation. After remaining a few weeks, rack off and bung up closely in clean casks.

AN OLD LADY'S STORY.

I.

When John and I were married first
We had no money to spare;
I had a cotton dress or two,
And a tidy shawl to wear.
And John had his decent working clothes,
And a suit for the Sabbath Day;
We were so poor and yet so rich!
We were happy as birds in May.

II.

When John and I were married first.
We had only a two-roomed cot;
But then there wasn't a penny of debt
On either the house or lot.
The law of love was on the hearth,
The roses sweet at the gate,
And John and I knew wealth would come
And were happy enough to wait.

III.

When John and I were married first,
The count of our friends was small,
But the few we had were good and true,
And it mattered not after all;
For early and late our hands were full,
And happy enough were we
To think the prattle of baby tongues
The best of good company.

IV.

Now I have rings and chains of gold;
I have satins and lace rare
(For John thinks nothing is rich enough
For his dear old wife to wear).
But I remember my cotton dress,
My hood, and my little shawl;
And, oh! how full of pleasant things
Are the days that they recall!

V.

Our two-roomed cot has grown for me
To a mansion large and grand;
And proud enough am I of it,
For it's all John's Head and Hand.
But often I think of our little house
(Its memories never tire),
And how John laughed for very joy
When we lighted our first fire.

VI.

So youths and maidens marry for love.
If you've Love and Health,
Marry for love without a fear;
You can work and wait for wealth.
Easy to work when toil is bliss,
And easy enough to wait
When Love sings every hour away
And blesses you early and late!

PUZZLES.

XVI.

DIAMONDS.

1.

A letter. An exclamation of surprise. A female name. A sea fish. Ebony. A religious woman. A letter.

2.

A letter. Refusal. Relating to a feature. A female name. To forbid. A male name. A letter.

XVII.

HALF SQUARES.

1.

Resembling a grape. Words. Sea eagles. An abbreviation. A pronoun. A letter.

2.

A letter. A pronoun. A male nickname. Certain. To grieve. To unite.

XVIII.

CHARADE.

My first gives protection to garden and flowers,
Yet to use it will anger our foe;
My second, if perfect, gives pleasure and ease
To all who in safety would go.
At sight of my whole our grannies would shake,
And cry out, with sore distrust,
"Don't use it, dear children!" We smilingly say
"Never fear, dearest granny; we must."

XIX.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Could all the forms reflected here
Be fixtures as they pass,
The world itself might scarce contain
The shadows on the glass.

Led by their Queen, the valiant tribe
Of warlike Britons see,
Conquered, alas, through force of arms
By Roman soldiery!

Sentinels grim, the giant pair
Adorn a noble hall
Renowned for civic pageantry,
High feast, and festival.

When of domestic bliss the scene,
In lowliest hut or cot,
Those clustered round the humble store
Need never mourn their lot.

It swifter flies than lightning's flash,
May dart from pole to pole,
Forth into future penetrate
Or scrolls of past unroll.

Potent possession will the first
Letters of each proclaim;
More powerful still when with the last
Combined in lawful aim.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

XII.

1. I, van, hop. 2. Art, I, choke.

XIII.

D E L F	B U R T	D E E P	H A R P
E M I R	U S E R	E L L A	A L A R
L I F E	R E D E	E L M S	E A V E
F R E E	T R E E	P A S S	P R E Y

XIV.

Panneau.

XV.

Cervantes, thus:

Corunna.
Estremadura.
Rosas.
Vittoria.
Almaraz.
Navarre.
Trafalgar.
Ecija.
Salamanca.

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